आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः।

*Let noble thoughts come to us from every side*

—Rigveda, I-89-i

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## BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

*General Editors*:
R. R. DIWAKAR
S. RAMAKRISHNAN

206

# SIDELIGHTS ON INDIAN PRINCES

BY

JAISUKHLAL HATHI

BVB Sri Sankaracharya Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya
792

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Bhawan's Sri Sankaracharya Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya
792
Bharatiya Vidya Bharatiya ★ Mahavidyalaya

by
JAISUKHLAL HATHI

1975

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# KULAPATI'S PREFACE

THE Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impressions of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages.

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalm.

This scheme involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting itself to the utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit:

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions that allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities;

we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any make-shift way, but within the frame-work of the Moral Order; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the Indian mind, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata,* summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita* by H.V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata:* "What is not in it, is nowhere." After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who knows it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita,* which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone, the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

1, Queen Victoria Road,
New Delhi.
*October 3, 1951.*

K. M. MUNSHI

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## About these Stories

During the last five years I had the joyful and rewarding privilege of travelling with Shri Jaisukhlal Hathi, to almost all parts of India and Great Britain, as also some parts of Italy and Switzerland, in connection with the Bhavan's work.

The journeys were made by plane, train and car. The affectionate patriarch in Hathiji used to relieve the tedium of long-distance travels by his inimitable narration of delectable stories. The readers will find them interesting and instructive, absorbing and simple, and full of moral.

This cannot but be so, for the author was a teacher in his early life. A dedicated teacher regales his pupils with anecdotes and stories, to drive home to the budding minds sound moral values. Though Hathiji has played many roles in his life—Teacher, Lawyer, Adviser, Politician, Administrator, Union Cabinet Minister, Parliamentarian, Builder of Institutions, etc.—he has retained this trait of story-telling, undimmed by the efflux of time.

From the year 1936 to 1947, Hathiji was intimately connected with the Princely States of Saurashtra. He was one of their representatives in the Constituent Assembly.

The stories recounted in this book are "real-life" stories of which he had personal knowledge and in some of which he was a participant.

The stories exude uncommon commonsense. They also delightfully portray human nature at its best and worst. At our request, despite his many pre-occupations, Hathiji managed to reduce them to writing, and they were serialised in the "Bhavan's Journal", between 1970 and 1974. Some of them translated into Kannada, have appeared in Kannada journals.

I remember Hathiji once mentioning to me in passing, that he had occasion to narrate some of these stories to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan when he, as Minister-in-Waiting, accompanied the renowned Philosopher-President to Nepal. and to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru when he travelled with him as a ministerial colleague.

As the last four stories pertain to the Princely States, they are included in this collection.

We are sure, the general public will relish these stories.

*Vijaya Dashami,*
October 14, 1975.

S. RAMAKRISHNAN

## 1. HORSES FOR THE GOVERNOR

THIS happened in one of the smaller Princely States during the days of British rule in India. Through an accident of history, the tiny principality in question came to be wedged in between two big Princely States. Consequently, its ruler had a hard time keeping up with the Joneses, the Joneses in this case being the two neighbouring Maharajas. But, on one occasion, it was the keenness of the Maharaja to measure up to the Big Brothers that saved the State from an unpleasant situation.

The Maharaja had received intimation that the Governor of Bombay Presidency would be passing through his State on a particular day. According to prevailing custom, the Maharaja had to provide horses for the Governor's carriage for that part of his journey which lay within his State; but the Maharaja had no horses, at least no horses good enough for so august a personage as His Excellency. In order to cover up the shortcoming, the Maharaja tried to be a bit hoity-toity. "So what," he said, shrugging his plump shoulders, "the Governor is not coming to see me. He is only passing through my territory. Let him." And there the matter seemed to end. No one had the courage to point out to the Maharaja that it was not such a simple matter as to be shrugged off.

The harried State officials, therefore, accordingly informed the Political Agent, a dignitary who regarded himself in relation to the Princes, as a minor *Avatar* and was held in awe by the rulers of States under him. On his being told of the Little Maharaja's attitude, the Political Agent summoned the Ruler's representative and expressed his extreme displeasure in no uncertain terms, and threw out hints of serious consequences.

For the Maharaja's representative, this was a matter of grave concern, and the responsibility for resolving this tangle rested squarely on his shoulders. He, therefore, made an unscheduled call on the Maharaja. His only hope of persuading the Maharaja to provide horses for the Governor was to play upon his known dislike of his neighbours, and his strong determination never to allow them to get the better of him. And he set about exploiting that weakness.

"Your Highness," he said, addressing the Maharaja, "I am extremely worried. That is why I came rushing to you. I am told that our friend next door (he dared not refer to him by any more dignified title) has proposed that his horses should carry the Governor through our State. That, Sir, would mean that he is planning a calculated insult to your dignity and I for one shall . . ."

"Stop," shouted the Maharaja. "What is all this about other people's horses going through our land? Are you mad?"

The representative saw his chance and struck home. "Your Highness," he said, "the Political Agent is thinking of allowing our neighbour's horses to be used for the Governor's carriage when it passes through our State, if we are unable to provide horses for the purpose."

"But who says we can't?", thundered the Maharaja.

"Bu-t, bu-t," stuttered the representative, "we have no horses, Your Highness."

"We shall buy," came the reassuring answer from the Maharaja. "We shall get the best that money can buy. No one shall say that the Governor went through my State in a carriage drawn by horses belonging to people who owe their *Gaddi* to the goodwill of my forefathers."

So saying, he stood up, opened a cupboard and pulled out a bundle of currency notes. "Here, take these," he told his representative, "and buy the best horses you can find, and tell the Political Agent that our horses shall be ready for the Governor at the border."

The representative made to leave, but the Maharaja stopped him: "And also tell the Political Agent that I shall be there to receive the Governor."

## 2. A GIFT IS A GIFT

ONCE the Maharaja of a small State, accompanied by his Dewan, went out riding, and came upon a field of corn with lush crop, sturdy and tall. The Maharaja was delighted to see such a fertile piece of land, for his domains could boast of only a few like this. He got down from his horse, with the Dewan following suit, and leading the horse by the rein, walked round the field, and then into it, examining the well-filled cobs. When he stepped back, there was a glint in his eye, a glint the Dewan was quick to interpret—the Prince wanted the field for his personal farm.

"Whose field is this?" asked the Maharaja. "It belongs to our Charan,* Your Highness," the Dewan replied. But the Dewan was worried. A way had to be found to dissuade the Maharaja from pursuing his half-expressed acquisitive intentions. Or else, a grave injustice would be done and a blow struck at a respected tradition which involved the honour of the royal house, for a gift is a gift and it is particularly sacred when made to a Brahmin or a Charan. The field in question was a bounty from the Maharaja's forefathers to those of the Charan poet. It was an unbroken rule in Princely India that such gifts once made were not to be revoked, changed or tampered with, whatever the circumstances, and however strong the temptation.

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* Charans are the hereditary Bards (court poets).

On the way back, the Dewan was thinking hard and, by the time the two of them had reached the gates of the palace, he hit upon a plan. The moment the Maharaja got down from his horse, the Dewan was by his side and, taking off his *upavastra,* he started wiping the Maharaja's shoes vigorously. The Maharaja was taken aback. "What's this, Dewan Sahib?" he inquired. "What are you trying to do?" "Please, Your Highness," the Dewan pleaded, "let me wipe the dust off your shoes, otherwise a great sin will have been committed." "Sin!" the puzzled Maharaja exclaimed. "What sin? I have done no wrong. In any case, the servants are there to clean my shoes."

"No, no, Your Highness, this is urgent," said the Dewan, folding his hands in supplication. "If even a speck of this dust gets into the palace, great damage will have been done to the honour of your house."

"But I don't understand. Will you please explain yourself? Is it a joke?"

"Far be it from me to indulge in a joke on such a serious matter. I shall explain, Your Highness." The Dewan assumed a grave face. "This field you visited was given away as a gift by Your Highness's revered grandfather to the grandfather of our Charan, and in the days of your grandfather it used to be an unalterable tradition that no part of what had been gifted away, not even an iota should return to the palace. If, therefore, this dust from a field which is Charan's by virtue of an old, old benefaction gets into the palace, it will be an unwashable sin."

Once again, there was a glint in the Maharaja's eye, but this time it had a different meaning. He was pleased with the Dewan's stratagem by which he had tactfully brought home to him his obligation in the matter of the field, for he was as keen on keeping unsullied the name of his family as of his forbears were. "But how did you know what I was planning to do," he asked the Dewan.

"I have been a servant of Your Highness," the latter replied with a knowing look.

## 3. A PATRIOTIC RULER

DARBAR GOPALDAS, a ruler of a small State in pre-Independence India, once heard about a public meeting that was to be addressed by Mahatma Gandhi. He had read literature about Gandhiji and also his speeches and kept in close touch with the mass awakening that followed Gandhiji's advent into Indian politics.

He saw how the poor and the destitute who lived in a state of suppression and fear had suddenly become fearless, and were willing to consider no sacrifice too great for the sake of independence at the call of Gandhiji.

The *kshatratejas* that lay unburnished in the ruler for years now rose to the surface. The Darbar wished to attend one of the meetings which was going to be addressed by Gandhiji. He wished to have the Mahatma's *darshan,* and so be blessed.

Thousands upon thousands had been trekking slowly across rough village paths to reach the place from nearby villages. The whole air was filled with unbounded enthusiasm.

Naturally, all this was disconcerting to the Political Agents of the British and they were more vigilant and unforgiving where the Princes were concerned.

The Darbar broached the topic, that is, his desire to attend the meeting, to his Councillors. "What?" they all cried out in chorus. "Would you want this ancient house to collapse about your ears?" "But I must go," insisted the Darbar, "I have a great longing to listen to the Mahatma."

"You know, Darbar Saheb, the Political Agent is already wrath with us. In spite of our aloofness, they have been foisting the responsibility for every upsurge on us; they look at every act of ours with great suspicion."

"Well, I must go. That is what I said."

The Councillors of the Darbar reluctantly agreed on condition that he would proceed to the meeting incognito, dressed as an ordinary citizen, and not clothed in regal splendour.

So, with no Safa (turban), no *Choodidar Pyjama* and the other accoutrements but with a borrowed coat from a friend of his and bareheaded, though with joy welling up in his heart, the Darbar proceeded to the place of the meeting.

The Councillors wanted to make the venture doubly safe; so they too insisted on accompanying the Darbar. Their minds were so full of apprehension lest the Ruler's identity might be unmasked that they kept watching every little move and gesture of the Darbar. To them, Gandhiji's stirring call must have seemed like a cry in the wilderness.

The speech ended. The Councillors heaved a sigh of relief. Nothing untoward had so far happened. The Darbar would get back soon, and there the story would end. So they thought.

"Tilak Swarajya Fund. Now our volunteers will go round to make a collection," boomed the voice of the announcer. The Darbar's mind had meanwhile become greatly agitated. He had been affected profoundly by the message of the Mahatma. No contribution to the cause seemed too big. He instinctively searched his friend's coat that he had put on, but the pockets were empty. To his utter dismay, he realised that he had no money on him.

He told the Councillors that they should lend him some money which he might want to give to the volunteer who was approaching him. The Councillors would not oblige. It would be the height of treason and what would happen if the Political Agent came to know of it!

The Darbar was desperate. The volunteer had already come near. What an insult it would be to a Royal family if he was to turn back a volunteer that came for *dāna!*

There was a sudden glimmer on his face. Had he not the anklet of gold on him? That would solve the problem.

He hastened to untie it and after getting it free, he quietly dropped it into the *jholi* of the volunteer. The remonstrations of the Councillors went unheeded, and their attempt to reclaim it was impossible, for the volunteer had quickly moved further on.

The Councillors were thoroughly nonplussed. Their hearts went pit-a-pat as the volunteers, one by one, went to the Mahatma and poured out their collections.

Out fell the golden anklet, and the Mahatma who knew too well wherefrom it might have come, wished to meet the donor, The hand of the Darbar was frantically stretch out, but the Councillors would not let him reveal h identity.

Exasperated, the Darbar shouted: “Gandhi these friends of mine won’t let me come to you.”

The Councillors gave up the effort to conceal th identity of the Darbar. It was now just a matter hours or days, it seemed to them, before the axe fe on the Darbar.

Gandhiji looked at the Darbar. The anklet ha given him away, though the borrowed coat was doin its best to conceal his identity.

“Aren’t you Ruler of some Princely State?”

“Yes, Mahatmaji,” replied the Darbar reverentiall “Of course,” he added, “it is a small State.”

“You know what this means,” said Gandhiji. H would not accept an unwilling gift, or one made in fit of unmeditated enthusiasm.

“Have no misgivings, Gandhiji,” said the Darbar “I have given it with a full awareness of what it implies.

The audience was surprised to find who the man was, and was delighted at the praise the Mahatma showered on him. The Councillors’ efforts at concealment were thus completely foiled. There was no need for the Political Agent to institute elaborate investigations into the affair. Everything was as clear as daylight.

It was not very long after, that the Darbar was summoned to the presence of the Political Agent.

"As a Ruler, would you expect me to deny a gift to one who comes begging to me? That would run counter to the age-old traditions of Hindu Kings," the Darbar said.

"But, you should know," said the Political Agent "that this gift is being made to one who is out to overthrow the British regime. In offering the donation you are abetting an act of subversion."

There was here no mincing of words; they came in the wonted tones of high authority.

Nor was there any servility in the speech of the Darbar either. On the contrary it had the ring of defiance. "If the fight is for the independence of the country, how can I, as a son of Mother India, be out of it?"

The Darbar was promptly dethroned, as was to be expected. But the cause of Independence was strengthened by the association of a stout-hearted defender, who became one of the staunchest lieutenants of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Mahatma Gandhi and when the battle was joined fought to the finish.

## 4. A PRISONER WITHOUT PRISON

THE British rulers believed in fostering an endless hierarchy of subordinate powers among the Princely States with a view to the annihilation of the forces hostile to them. Thus they created seven classes of jurisdictional Talukdars in the Princely States, and let them enjoy varying degrees of civil and criminal powers, thus providing a fertile soil for an eternal play of jealousies and the resulting animosities among them.

Such was the state of affairs in the various Princely States of Kathiawar.

A sixth class jurisdictional ruler could exercise criminal power to the extent that he could convict a person and imprison him for a period of fifteen days. These powers were subject to constant change, since for any game of divide and rule, an unalterable status is always an obstacle. Hence the British occasionally enhanced these jurisdictional powers of individual princes, not always on merit, thus generating bitter jealousies among the Talukdars. One qualifying condition for higher status was good administration which necessarily meant 'pleasing the political agents' and ministering to the greater glory of the British rulers.

One such day of grace dawned once upon a time on a certain Talukdar, and from a mere three months' imprisonment he had his powers increased to a level where he could award imprisonment up to two years! It was a day of great rejoicing for the Talukdar and, of course, one of misery and concern for the other Talukdars round about in the area.

Naturally, the lucky (!) Talukdar spent more money on celebrating the day of rejoicing than on equipping himself with the wherewithal for even a dingy cell for the internment of any likely prisoners. He had other motives too in not having a prison. Apart from the question of a suitable building, there were other difficulties,—such as finding jailors and other attendants. But the chief problem was undoubtedly one of 'feeding the prisoner'. The Talukdar must have believed, with the more advanced prison reforms then in operation, that to feed a criminal was really a criminal waste of state funds! Worse still, it created a certain laziness which prevented the prisoner from becoming a productive member of society later.

The Talukdar's enhanced powers did, however, find fulfilment once when State officers brought him a man who qualified most fittingly for a month's imprisonment. The accused was promptly convicted.

Now came the question about where to house the prisoner. But an *Otta** in the gate of Darbargarh saved the ruler from the predicament. He asked the prisoner to sleep at night on the *Otta,* and for this act of compliance and good conduct he was to have the free run of the town the following morning. This suited the prisoner perfectly, and for a while the ruler too.

But the other Talukdars, the elderly ones among them, who were smarting under a sense of grievance because of the promotion of one of their co-Talukdars, soon found out what was going on. The Political Agent was informed while complaints poured in. As a result, the Political Agent decided to inspect the place in person without previous notice and satisfy for himself whether the complaints had any substance in them

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* Raised pavement.

The Darbargarh was some hundred miles from where the Political Agent stayed, but this did not dete him from making a sudden swoop. As good luck would have it, a representative stationed there came to know of the proposed visit of the Political Agent and he hurried to inform the Talukdar through a messenger of what was coming. Indeed, he was a very faithful old servant, and his master's weal counted with him.

The Talukdar was at first intrigued. "What could be the intention of this sudden visit on the part of the Political Agent," he asked. Shrewd man that he was, he however realized quickly enough that there could be only one reason for the visit—the complaints of the co-Talukdars. The crown sits uneasily on those that wear it!

At once the Talukdar sent his men to apprehend the prisoner but he was nowhere to be found. He had gone to a nearby town for extended operations, and was due only in the night. But meanwhile the Political Agent was approaching the town and the hundred miles would thin out soon.

One highly trusted man agreed to play the role of the prisoner on the *Otta*. And as it turned out, he played it skilfully well too, thanks to a fine performance by the stage-manager, the Talukdar himself.

The Political Agent arrived all flushed and angry, as he had done a hundred mile journey under a tropical sun, and was received with the usual "warm cordiality" and respect by the Talukdar. In India, as is the custom, he was offered 'cold welcome'—a *shaityopachāra*—and was asked to wash and help himself to a cooling fruit juice. The Political Agent was in a hurry. He did not want any of these courtesies at the moment. He wanted to inspect the prison quickly, and do only what was needed in pursuance of the specific purpose of his visit.

As the Political Agent grew hotter with the passage of time, the shrewd Talukdar became more and more importunate, and gently reminded the Agent that first things come first. He must first have a wash, a cooling drink and some rest, in view of the hundred-mile exhausting journey.

"But, first and foremost let me know," bawled the Political Agent in a tone of impatience and anger, "where is your prison?"

The Talukdar's conjectures had proved right. He came to see the prison!

In contrast to the sharp impatient questionings of the Political Agent, the Talukdar's answers had a quiet skill and cunning. He told him that he, as a poor Talukdar, could ill afford a *grand building* for housing prisoners, as he felt that his first duty was to help the law-abiding ones with ordinary amenities. He would like the Political Agent to take a look, of course after he had his bath and his rest, at the new girls' school and the big well for irrigational purposes which he had built. This casual leisurely account of the good things he had done only irritated the Political Agent all the more, and he spoke rudely and bluntly.

"Look here," he said, "I have received many complaints about the way in which you deal with prisoners.

I have come to satisfy myself about the substance these charges. So I care not what else there is to se I would like to see your prison and the prisoner. Do waste my time any more. After I see the prison I wou be gone."

The Talukdar continued nevertheless in the sam quiet and humble manner.

"Sir," he pleaded, "I mentioned to you that I cou ill afford the luxury of a fine building for a jail. I mak do with what I have, and always exercise whatev powers I enjoy with the utmost care and humanity. you insist, I shall first take you to the prison straigh away, but I am afraid you will be disappointed."

"Why is this fellow so hesitant? Is he trying hide something?" thought the Agent.

The Talukdar felt he had now prolonged the gam sufficiently. So he took the Political Agent to the *Ot* without more ado. The 'prisoner' was seen and als interrogated. He came out with a long tale of wo and complaints, too numerous for recording. The Pol tical Agent listened without visible emotion to the sorr tale he heard.

The virtuoso that he was, the Talukdar would no let the drama end without a proper *denouement*. H knew that more complaints would reach the Agent i he left things half done.

"Sir," he began in a hesitant and appealing manner "Wouldn't you like to have a photograph taken of thi prisoner, perhaps as he stands in front of you? Wouldn' that make matters doubly sure?"

The Political Agent bit his lips. He had been outwitted. It had not occurred to him that a photograph would be excellent testimony!

"I shall send for the photographer in the nearby town, Sir. You know ours is a small village, and there is no photographer here. In the meanwhile, you might have a rest, and treat yourself to a good dinner."

The Talukdar knew that the Political Agent was not inclined to wait. But the Talukdar insisted. He told him that his co-Talukdars were veterans in the game and they would surely insinuate that the prisoner seen by the Agent was a proxy who was impersonating the real prisoner.

The ring of innocence in that voice and the candour of it all made a deep impression on the Political Agent.

"Look here," said the Political Agent, this time with evident finality. "I have satisfied myself about the matter. The complaint is false. Photo or no photo, you stand absolved of the charges. I shall not listen to any more of their complaints. Be at peace, good-bye."

## 5. HOUSE TAX BY CONSENT

A CERTAIN Highness had just returned from a tour of Europe. He saw on his tour several modern cities like London, Geneva, Paris and Rome. The programme was so crowded that he had hardly any time to reflect during the tour. But when he returned to his own capital—an old city, built some 1200 years ago, having all the marks of medievalism such as narrow, congested, dirty streets, insanitary ramshackle houses, and with neither a park nor a garden, not to speak of the luxurious shopping centres that he had seen in those cities—he began to reflect on the depressing contrasts.

As ruler of the State, he felt it was his duty to make his capital city a modern one like the cities he had seen. And so he lost no time in getting plans drawn up with estimates of cost by leading town-planners in Paris. When the plans arrived, he discovered that many houses had to be demolished for widening the roads or for providing recreational grounds and parks.

He discussed the subject with his Dewan.

"Dewan Saheb," he said to his minister, "don't you think we should make our city both beautiful and modern? I hate those narrow streets. Besides, there are no parks or recreational grounds for our people."

The Dewan knew well that all this was the result of the foreign tour, and that in the first flush of enthusiasm the Maharaja had become greatly enamoured of "City Beautiful" programmes.

"Look at these plans and estimates! I got them done in Paris. What do you think of them?"

The Dewan looked at the plans but concentrated on the estimates. From the estimates his eyes wandered back to the plans. Finally he looked out through the window. He paused a while and then replied: "You see, Your Highness! I would very much like this. But. . . ."

"You mean the estimates are high."

"Not exactly. The real trouble is that they will get higher still when we start on the job."

"How?"

The Dewan began to explain. He referred to the houses of some leading citizens of the town and said they would ask for heavy compensation if the houses were demolished. The Maharaja had not thought of this. He appeared to be impressed. He was also anxious that his plans should not fall through because of any hasty reckless step.

"I see," said His Highness and continued, "so, the question of compensation will be there, and perhaps also the possibility of discontent among the people, as you suggest. Anyway, I would like my people to remain content here and not migrate to another State."

The Dewan was happy. He had won his point.

"But," said His Highness, in a tone that smacked of injured pride, "you see I don't want my prestige to suffer. So forget all about the plans, and let no soul so much as know that such a thing was ever thought of."

"Doubt not for a moment my integrity, Your Highness" answered the Dewan with evident relief.

A year rolled by and the Dewan himself had forgotten all about His Highness' desire to make his city grand and up-to-date. Then one day the Prince summoned the Dewan, and told him that he wanted some sort of a revision in house tax so that they could realize increased revenue. In fact, the house taxes were fixed some thirty years ago and it was time for revision.

A committee was constituted to look into the matter, consisting of two officials and three non-officials. This was a novel procedure in those days, and the people attributed such progressive ideas to the visit that the Maharaja had paid to Europe a year before. They were very happy. They showered praises on His Highness.

What, however, intrigued the Dewan was the instructions given to the committee. His Highness had asked them to be considerate, and to accept the valuation given by the parties. He had warned them that not doing so would make the people resentful, and that was the last thing he wanted.

"But, Your Highness," pleaded the Dewan, "we shall certainly not get more money that way."

"Don't worry about money. I only need the latest figures of valuation."

The committee worked diligently and finished all the cases without any delay. Once the people got scent of the secret instructions that the valuation of the owner should be accepted, they were highly gratified. Thinking that they were being very clever they sent in the lowest possible valuations; the committee played its part and fixed a higher figure. As was expected, there were appeals and protests from the property-owners. And the committee after some show of opposition lowered the valuation. The owners were highly pleased. And they promptly made a formal declaration that they accepted the figure, which they said was fair and reasonable.

The Dewan, who had forgotten all about the plans for remodelling the town, could hardly understand why His Highness ever embarked on this useless and cumbersome task of valuation. For, the figures given and accepted would not provide half the amount of money that was being collected earlier.

It took another two months for the Dewan to realise that he and the citizens of the State had been cleverly outwitted. His Highness announced that he would now put through his old plans for beautifying the capital and that he would readily pay full compensation to those people whose houses had to be demolished for the purpose. Since the amount of compensation was fixed in accordance with the valuation which the owners themselves had made, they were in no position to object or protest.

But they and the other citizens had more than their compensation. In a short while, there came up a grand new city, with highways, parks, gardens and recreational grounds—a perpetual reminder to the people of the ingenuity of a ruler who, though he played a clever trick on them, did so only for their own lasting benefit.

# 6. ONLY SALUTES COULD MAKE HIM HAPPY

THE MAHARAJA of a certain tiny State was a tru Spartan in his ways. Neither summer's scorching hea nor the severe benumbing cold of the winter months could make him leave his State. He lived in absolut comfort in his ancestral palace, whatever the season. But, as years rolled by and the strength and vigour of youth was on the wane, his capacity of endurance also underwent a slight decline. One summer day in the midst of the sweltering heat that afflicted the place a thought crossed his mind: Why after all should I not go to a hill station, say Mahabaleshwar, for a change?

No sooner did the report go round the palace than the courtiers who ever hankered after a good time, rushed to him, and poured out advice in abundance. What is a visit to Mahabaleshwar worth without a few days spent in Bombay?—they told him; and painted an alluring picture of life in the city and its posh hotels, particularly the Taj Hotel. Should not the Maharaja dine there and spend a couple of days in real Moghul comfort?

The Maharaja readily agreed, and very soon all arrangements were complete. Return tickets, accommodation, lunch and dinner menus, and every little detail were looked into carefully by the courtiers and advisers, and they made sure that the plans were all perfect. They took every care to see that Bombay did not in any way displease the Maharaja as that was his first visit to the city, and only on the complete success of such a visit would they be assured of similar trips in the future.

The day on which the Maharaja alighted and was ushered into the beautifully and gorgeously furnished rooms in the Taj was a day of great excitement for him. He had never seen the sea, the waves rising in succession and washing the shores or dashing violently against the stone embankments. The Taj Hotel itself was to him a thing of marvel, but the sea was wholly fascinating, as he had never seen even a small coastal town in all his life. The steamers, the launches, the boats made an indelible impression on his mind, and it was as though he was like a child moving in a dream world, almost oblivious of his status—the status of a Maharaja.

The afternoon lunch was most delicious as he had the choicest of dishes, and more so since they were served in such grand style by liveried waiters. The luxurious room let him have his afternoon nap with hardly any disturbance. When he woke up, the courtiers were all ready there to tell him that he could go for a delightful drive in a coach along the beautiful promenade and the Chowpatty beach.

The Maharaja was only too eager as he had been told that he could see the finest buildings in Bombay on one side with the sea lapping against the shores on the other, the two together providing an enchanting spectacle. The courtiers in their anxiety to ensure that visits to Bombay should become a permanent feature of the Maharaja's life in the future had, however, overlooked one crucial point.

The coach drew up at the Taj Hotel at the appointed time, and the Maharaja stepped out of the lift on to the outer verandah. He looked round in the usual roya manner at the courtiers who in a language half courteous and half servile requested the Maharaja that h should deign to get into the regal coach. The coac then proceeded majestically on its way, and the Maharaja kept looking at the huge crowds blissfully immerse in their own little world of merry-making. At first th Maharaja's natural instinct drew him closer to these folk simple and totally forgetful of everything else excep their little round of pleasures. But long years of roya living with all its attendant rituals and formalities ha the last word. He felt strangely unhappy in mind. Th festive crowds, the cool breeze, the clear blue sky tha vied with the ocean in its colour and expanse—all thes should have made him happy and cheerful, and indee they did make him happy. But the one thing that h desired most, even amidst all this bliss, was unfortunately missing. The thought of this drowned all the natura joy, and made him depressed.

The courtiers scarce suspected or noticed that ther was a tinge of dissatisfaction in the countenance of th Maharaja, when he returned. They went ahead merril making all arrangements for the entertainment both o the Maharaja and of themselves—visits to cinema theatres, motor boat trips etc. They hoped that the stay in Bombay might even be prolonged and the visit to Mahabaleshwar cut short.

After the first round of visits and sight-seeing, the Maharaja had his dinner, and was resting for the night. He called the courtiers and brusquely asked them when they were planning to leave Bombay.

The question was a bomb-shell to them; they were still settling down to enjoy their many bouts of merry-making in Bombay and the thought of return was remote.

"Your Highness," said one of them, "perhaps a week from now we could think of leaving Bombay. Even a week is too short for such a big city."

"But, I should like to get back soon," said the Maharaja. "These men here are total strangers. Not a soul appears to recognise me."

The courtiers divined at once the true nature of the malady. They withdrew telling the Maharaja that they would make the necessary cancellations and arrangements so that he could leave Bombay not later than two days.

The night passed rather uncomfortably for the courtiers. Before retiring to bed they held a conference and were busy searching for an answer to the psychological loneliness of the Maharaja. How could they make the Maharaja less solitary and forlorn!

The answer came in a flash to one of them.

"Salutes," he shouted to the others. "Have you thought of that? In the home State the Maharaja had those turbaned saluters of his, but where can we find them in Bombay?"

"But find we must, or else, we shall have to forget those grand trips we were dreaming of for the future."

In the morning the first outing was on purpose delayed. Meanwhile the courtiers hired a few hundred persons and had them nicely dressed up in the usual turbaned manner. Specific instructions were given to these hired 'saluters' and one courtier was detailed to supervise their proper deployment on the Chowpatty beaches.

The Maharaja stepped out as usual from the lift and was pleasantly surprised to see the respectful bow of a band of admirers, turbaned and well-groomed. And in the evening as usual when the drive began he noticed the large crowds, but with a difference. There was a sprinkling of these turbaned 'saluters' in the sea of humanity, and as the coach neared them, they sprang up in total loyalty and bowed low to the Maharaja. As the coach proceeded, the courtiers' taxis ahead picked up one of the platoons and deployed them for similar action at a farther point on the Chowpatty beach. And so it went. All along the drive there were turbaned men here and there, who stood to attention as the Maharaja's coach passed by.

The day was a resounding success, and as a grand finale the Maharaja was once again ushered into the Taj Hotel amidst the smart salutes of a dozen of these hired men.

The situation had been transformed. At the usual conference that night the Maharaja who was in great spirits, spoke in a highly jovial manner. He inquired of how these saluters had suddenly appeared. "Oh, Your Highness," one of them explained, "Bombay is full of your humble subjects. Only a few came to know of Your Highness' visit and stay here, and they hastened to offer obeisance to your Highness. Many many more will be pleased to see Your Highness in the days following...But...."

"Well, don't worry. Cancel the new arrangement. I mean to stay here for a week more."

# 7. A NAWAB'S LOVE OF EDUCATION

THE all-round but child-like curiosity of a certain Nawab Saheb would not let him pursue any one hobby for any length of time. His mind would settle bee-like on one hobby such as photography for a while, and then would rush to another such as music in a moment's time. Sometimes when his martial instincts rose to the surface, he would take to riding or hunting, and at other moments when soft artistic influences played on his mind, he would turn to painting.

In these restless flights from one hobby to another the Nawab once chanced to discover an interest in education. It all happened this way. The Ruler of a neighbouring State had started a college, and since there were no colleges in the neighbouring States students from all these States flocked to the newly opened college. Earlier they were obliged to move to Bombay and study at colleges which were, to say the least, very expensive, and hence not within the reach of many. Once this college came up nearer at home it became possible for many to join it

The Nawab came to know of this, and summoning the Dewan asked him why his State lagged behind in higher education. He was politely informed that it was a matter of executive decision, and the Nawab Saheb had not issued orders and given directions in this regard. So no college had been opened in his State.

"Well then," said the Nawab, "make all neces arrangements for the starting of a college here."

The Dewan Saheb narrated some of the difficul and requirements, like a suitable building, obtainin highly qualified and competent principal and staff. Nawab knew from experience that money could acc plish all these tasks. So he told the Dewan that he n not stint in the expenditure of money for the purp but should proceed forthwith to make all necess arrangements.

The foundation-laying ceremony was quickly o and the builders put up a fine structure for the colleg a short time. A competent man from Bombay was quisitioned and on his recommendation and advice qu fied professors in various subjects were appointed. T Nawab was satisfied with the new venture but utte one last word as well-meant advice.

"Principal Saheb, I would like you to devote best of your attention to our children here in this c lege. I don't mind the expenses; you are free to spe whatever money is required to obtain the best resu But I should like to see students coming out in flyi colours at the examination."

The Principal assured him that two years of ha work was necessary, and that he and his staff would ta all possible care to see that the students did well at t examination, and brought credit to the state.

The appointed time for the examinations duly a rived, and the boys who numbered some thirty had make a journey to Bombay to appear for the examin tion. The Nawab met them, and spoke words of e couragement, and inquired about the mode of transpor and the arrangements for boarding and lodging in Bombay. He specially told the Principal that the boys should be looked after very well so that they could put forth their best effort at the examination.

The Principal accompanied the boys to Bombay and supervised every little detail. He even went to the examination hall, and waited until the boys got into the hall to help them with last minute hints and suggestions. After the day's ordeal was over, the boys were interrogated and answers verified, and further instructions given to them for the next day. In this manner the Principal supervised the work of the boys, looked after their needs as a kind father would, and brought them safely back to the native place. He was quite confident that out of the 30 boys 25 or more would come out in the first division and that his efforts would not therefore be in vain. However, he did not tell the Nawab about his secret hopes, but merely said that he was waiting for the results.

It did not take long for the results to appear. When they were published the boys were overjoyed, and so was the Principal and also the Dewan Saheb. The Dewan Saheb with the Principal called on the Nawab in order to pass on the good news to him.

"Your Highness," said the Dewan, "our Principal is happy to inform you that our boys have done well. Out of the 30 students that went to Bombay, 27 have been put in first class, two in the second class and one in the third class."

The Dewan and the Principal hoped to see the countenance of the Nawab brighten with joy. On the contrary his eye-brows knitted in evident anger.

"What?", he shouted, "Did I not ask you to spe as much as you want on the boys? Why did you three boys in the second, and one in the third cla We have our own Railways, and we could have req sitioned as many first class coaches as possible."

The Principal left bowing to the Nawab. It w too much for all the labour he had put in. As so as he reached Bombay he sent in his resignation, a there was no withdrawal as the Nawab had been inform too late of the meaning of classes in an examination a that they had nothing to do with classes on the Railwa

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## 8. CONVICT AS JUDGE

THE ruler of one of the States once found himself n a quandary. The State jailor came and informed him that the lawyer who had been recently sentenced to undergo rigorous imprisonment could not be assigned hard manual labour as doctors had advised against it. But work of some kind or other he must be given; else what was the fun of sentencing a person to rigorous imprisonment? The jailor thought of assigning to the man some copying work, but that was not exacting enough.

Just at this moment the post of District Judge in the State fell vacant, and the ruler at once decided that the convicted lawyer's services could be utilised for filling the gap. The Judge was being paid a sum of Rs. 300/- a month; this large amount would also be saved. So the ruler instructed the jailor to bring the lawyer in chains everyday to the Court and make him sit in an allotted place, and listen carefully to the arguments on both sides from there.

The Head Clerk was to officiate as District Judge during this period. Criminal cases were also heard by the clerk, but only in the presence of the convict lawyer. When all the evidence was recorded, the lawyer would be asked to study the case and write out his judgment in his cell. This he did with remarkable fairness and equity, and in a most satisfactory manner. Very rarely were the parties concerned dissatisfied with the judgment. And even where an appeal was preferred, it was

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invariably turned down and the decision of the Distri
Court upheld. All this pleased the ruler greatly, sin
he saved Rs. 300 a month on a Judge, and also had t
satisfaction of making the convicted lawyer do som
hard work. More than all this, what made a real i
pact on the mind of the people in general was the cleve
ness and impartiality of the judgments.

However, curious eyes were always riveted on th
convict who came every day to the Court at 10 a.m. ar
left at the end of the day at 5 p.m. It was not very lon
before some people came to know the mystery of the pr
ceeding. Once this was revealed, they thought it the
duty to convey their objection to the ruler. The rul
had by now been fortified by the admirable work do
by the lawyer, and the complimentary remarks of high
Courts regarding his judgments. So the Ruler brush
aside the complaints and simply told such people th
they could always take recourse to the Appellate Cou
if they were not satisfied with the judgment. But th
meant nothing as the Appellate Court never once r
versed the decision of the lower Court.

Some time later, an interesting case came up. O
of the relatives of the lawyer was brought before t
Judge for prosecution. All eyes were now turned
this case. People knew that a relative of the law
was being tried and assumed that surely the lawyer wou
somehow or other give a judgment in favour of his r
lative.

The lawyer, in keeping with the best traditions a
precedents of justice, begged of the Ruler to excuse hi
from being present in the Court and from hearing t
particular case. He pleaded that it would not be proper

his part to write the judgment as the Court happened to be examining a case in which a relative of his was involved. The Ruler would not agree; he insisted on the lawyer carrying out his work as usual. So the lawyer sat and listened to the case as before, but reluctantly, though with all due care and an impartial mind.

As the case proceeded, people began whispering among themselves that the lawyer was trying to find some excuse or other to save his relative. But the lawyer carried on, paying no heed to the gossip. Ultimately he 'weighed most carefully the evidence on both sides, and came to the conclusion that the relative was guilty. So he returned a judgment of 'guilty' though the man concerned was his own relative.

This surprised the people, as it was contrary to what one would expect of human nature. But the ruler began to wonder how such an honest and virtuous lawyer could have committed any offence meriting rigorous imprisonment. The lawyer then related to the Ruler his story, and told him how his frankness and honesty had made him unpopular and an object of dislike, mostly to the judges. The Ruler heaved a sigh of relief, because it reinforced his confidence in the man. He not only set the lawyer free, but made him District Judge.

## 9. A NOVEL WAY OF TAXATION

BOUNDARY disputes existed even when the British were complete masters and ruled India with absolute power. The 'native' States enjoyed a sort of secondary suzerainty under the overall suzerainty of the British. This was a happy state of affairs for the British, because they could exploit every known weakness of the rulers and the people, setting one against another, so that the rulers' energies, frittered away in internecine strife, would not be available for any consolidation that could be used against the foreign power.

Once there arose an important case in the High Court of Bombay, centred in a boundary dispute between two States, one big and the other small. The bigger State was neither apologetic nor embarrassed because of the disparity in size between the two; nor did the smaller State ever betray any sense of inferiority, where prestige was concerned. So the case dragged on, and the poor small State was slowly drained of the money in its coffers in meeting legal and other expenses.

The people too like the Ruler were never so patriotic as when this dispute became active. They would never let an inch of their territory to be snatched away by the bigger state. So they paid their taxes fully, often a year's tax in advance, and sometimes when their patriotic fervour was skilfully exploited by the tax officers, they were willing to give even two years' taxes in advance. Moneys on such monopoly holdings as *gānja*, *bhāng*, liquor were also similarly paid in full well before their time. The State officials had collected all that they could from the people and, of course, without provoking any sense of resentment or grievance.

The money so accumulated had all been spent, and the treasuries of the small State were nearly exhausted with hardly a few thousands left. But the fateful day at last had arrived, or was almost there when the final hearing on the boundary dispute was to be completed. This was crucial, for here it would be decided once for all to whom the disputed land should belong.

How could the Ruler miss such a session or not send his counsel? But the journey required a minimum of some twenty thousand rupees, and so the Ruler was again in a dilemma. The Dewan was summoned, and the discussion that followed between the two brought out the real state of affairs with regard to finance. No more money could be raised. The people had given all that they possibly could, and to tax them further would be to create unrest and perhaps open opposition.

The Dewan made an unpalatable suggestion: how about borrowing money by pledging the jewels of the Rani Saheba? But then how could a Ruler think of borrowing from the common people?

"Cannot twenty thousand be raised by the people for this important affair?", the Ruler asked in exasperation.

No. It could not be raised, explained the Dewan quietly.

"No! Is that the final answer?" asked the Ruler. "Look, Go and fetch the Raj Purohit," he ordered.

“But”, cut in the puzzled Dewan in amazeme
“What will the Raj Purohit do?”

“Don’t worry about that,” assured the Ruler, “
the Purohit be brought into my presence.”

Soon the Raj Purohit came. The ruler consult
him, and fixed the most suitable and auspicious day f
the *Chūdākarma* of his eldest son, the heir appare
The seven year old boy was in any case due to have t
*Saṁskāra,* and the ruler divined that the right time h
come.

Arrangements were made in haste. Invitations we
sent to all, and to the maternal uncle of the boy in par
cular. A grand day it was, and everyone was in a jo
ous mood. All thought of the case had faded away fro
everyone’s mind and there was jubilation everywhere.

As was the custom on such occasions, the first
honour the Ruler with a present was the maternal unc
of the boy. He gave, in addition to rich presents in t
form of clothing, silver ware etc., a sum of Rs. 200
in cash. Then others also came with costly presen
that spoke eloquently of their status and the degree
their relationship or friendship with the ruler. The com
mon people also were generous in offering gifts. F
who does not like to see a boy of seven, the son of th
Ruler, the would-be Ruler perhaps after the father, goin
through his ‘tonsure’ ceremony? So they all flocke
and gifts poured in.

The treasurer was meanwhile busy on a differen
and more important kind of work. At last he came an
reported that the presents amounted to Rs. 21,000.

The ruler proceeded on the appointed day to Bombay with his counsel. The hearing was over, and the judgment returned in favour of the Ruler. He had won his lands back, and without alienating his own people, who had gifted Rs. 21,000 for the heir apparent's *saṁskāra* of *chūdākarma*. Indeed, the Raj Purohit had chosen the most auspicious day for the ceremony!

## 10. A RULER WHO SERVED HIS PEOPLE

THE town wore a deserted look, for the epidemi of plague, which was raging in all its fury had claime and was claiming a minimum of ten victims every da in a population of a mere 25,000. Of course, the wea thier section of the community which got scent of th epidemic, had left for safer places in good time. Thos who had other homes to go to had also migrated a littl later, when they found that it was unsafe to stay longe in the town. But the fate of those who had nowher to go was miserable. They stayed on counting thei days, thanking the Lord for every day that passed wit out disaster.

The Ruler of the State had been advised sufficientl early by the medical officer to flee to a safer place, an camp there till the epidemic subsided. The importu nities of the medical officer had no effect on the Rule he was made of sterner stuff altogether. "How could I, he thought, "leave my people to their fate, and mysel flee to take refuge in a place of safety?" He had bee brought up in the older and nobler tradition of th patriarchic responsible monarch, who like the Su moved round and round and never rested while in th service of his people. He regarded it his sacred dut to stand by his people in times of distress. So he wa determined not to go.

Having decided to stay, the Prince next made his plans about the course of action that they should al follow. He asked the medical officer and his team to make arrangements for looking after those who had already been smitten with the disease. As for those who were sound and healthy till then, he ordered that they should be evacuated to nearby safer villages. Still many were left who had to be nursed and cared for in his own town.

Every morning, and also in the evening, he took a round through the town. He visited the slum areas, the Harijan Vas, and found that the condition there was appalling. Possibly, even animals had better sheds to live in than the hovels he saw. There, in the most congested of slum dwellings, badly ventilated, amidst dirt and squalor and with nothing that would help fight the disease, four or more persons suffering from plague would often lie huddled together. Relief workers were busy ministering to their needs unmindful of the awesome consequences. Such was the love that these selfless workers had for their own kith and kin that they took no heed of the terrible risks that they ran.

The Prince was struck with intense pity and grief; he visited these areas again and again and saw to it that no one suffered or died because of lack of nursing care or medical attention.

One day while he was on one such round he heard that a certain old woman was lying uncared for in one of the houses in an isolated locality. The street that led to this house was so narrow that he could go there only on foot. The medical officer and others advised him strongly not to go, as there was every danger of his catching the infection. However, the Prince insisted on visiting the plague-infected lonely old woman.

When the Prince reached the house, he was shocked to find the ghastly condition of the old woman. She lay there helpless, making gestures as if asking for water; her throat had dried up. Her only son was already dead, cruelly snatched away by the scourge. Three days had gone by and there was not a soul for furlongs around that could help her in her need. Every single neighbour had left the place.

The Ruler consoled the woman as best he could and made arrangements for a nurse to be in attendance at the place. The doctors too called regularly, and began to treat her. The Ruler also would come there every day without fail, and inquire about her health and note the progress she was making. The old woman begged the Ruler not to risk his own life for her sake; she was afraid, having had the misfortune of seeing her young son snatched away, that the Prince himself might fall a victim to the dread disease. She had resigned herself to her fate, and wanted nothing but death and deliverance. She was sick and tired of life, having lost the one prop she had, the son.

The Ruler tried to console her with the assurance that he was there to take the place of her dead son, and that he would look after her with the same love and care as her son might. This show of real concern for the old woman, almost in the manner of a son, miraculously enabled her to recover sooner than expected, while new hope filled her life.

After a couple of months, the virulence of the disease subsided, and the town began to fill up once more with the people who had left in such panic. When they returned, they saw how courageously the Ruler had served the poor and the sick; and the more affluent among those that had left, felt secretly ashamed for having run away from the place without a thought for the people they were leaving behind to shift for themselves.

The Ruler had won their admiration and was idolized more than ever. It must be added that the British administration, however, had been displeased with the Ruler for his progressive views and some of his actions and later tried to concoct some excuse for taking over the administration. But the people who knew their Ruler well and adored and respected him, stood like a rock by his side, and foiled all attempts by the British to depose him.

## 11. AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE GOVERNO

SOME work, which a certain Maharaja of a tir state fancied to be of great importance and urgenc made him think of seeking an appointment with the Go ernor at the earliest opportunity. So he called his D wan and said: “Dewan Saheb, we must see the Go ernor immediately. The matter is urgent, and will broo no delay.”

The Dewan was somewhat disconcerted. He di not speak.

“Let us go to Bombay tomorrow. We will be the by 10 a.m. And, of course, you will see to it that get an appointment with the Governor in the evenin at the latest.”

The Dewan knew the obstacles in the way of gettin such an early appointment, that too with a Governo So he told the Maharaja, with all the politeness he coul command, that that was unthinkable.

The Maharaja had a sense of self-importance tha made him feel that, after all, the Governor was just a employee of His Majesty, the King of England. An that he being a Maharaja enjoyed a status that was, i not equal to the sovereign king, certainly above that o an employee of the king. So he thought that the Gov ernor was bound to accede to his wishes.

The Dewan felt that there was no use in pursuin the argument any further with the Maharaja, and so he assured him that he would do his best to get him an appointment with the Governor as desired.

Accordingly, the next morning, the Maharaja with his retinue proceeded to Bombay, and there they were as scheduled by 10 a.m.

Lest the Dewan, who had already given an indication of the possible difficulties, should slacken or shilly-shally, the Maharaja asked him to see the Secretary to the Governor in person. He mentioned also what the problem was, and once again stressed the great urgency of the matter.

The Dewan knew that the question was not as important as was being made out, but there was no way out of the predicament. He had to make his best efforts to get an appointment.

However, he knew that there were insurmountable difficulties, and that in any case the interview would not be given for that very day. So, his mind busied itself with plans to extricate himself out of an unpleasant situation.

He saw the Secretary, and made it known to him that the matter was urgent, and that the Maharaja was rather insistent on an interview with the Governor that very day. The Secretary told the Dewan that an appointment for the same day was absolutely out of question, but considering the nature of the case, he would, and that with great difficulty fix an appointment for the next day between 6 and 7 p.m.

The Dewan left the office of the Secretary partly dejected, and had now to find some way of explaining the situation to the Maharaja. A plan gradually too shape in his mind. Soon he got into touch with a reputed astrologer of the place, one who was known t have been consulted by 'big ones'. He told him ho things stood, and gave him clear instructions concerning the manner in which the issue should be dealt with After providing for every possible contingency, he fel that he was ready to meet the Maharaja.

The Maharaja was waiting for him anxiously. Whil entering the room the Dewan put on an air of jubilation and announced to the Maharaja that he had succeede in getting an interview for the same day between 6 an 7 p.m. The Maharaja received the news with grea satisfaction. However, he only remarked: "I knew yo would succeed. Did I not tell you that a Governo cannot deny an interview to a Maharaja? He has save himself from the possible wrath of the British Kin anyway."

The Dewan knew better. But it was not the tim for him to say anything. The Dewan was asked to ge ready as early as 4 p.m., as they had to negotiate crowded streets to get to the place of their appointment. Th Maharaja also got ready for the fateful meeting wit the Governor.

Just then there was a knock at the door, and th Maharaja, thinking that it was the Dewan, asked hi to come in. But the person who appeared at the doo was an astrologer, with a forehead displaying an unusually large quantity of vermilion. Possibly, the quantity exhibited was in direct proportion to the fame an stature of the astrologer. After the preliminaries wer over, the Maharaja thought that it would be a good thing now that there was an astrologer, if he consulted him about the fate of his mission to the Governor. He called the Dewan.

"Dewan Saheb, here is an astrologer of great fame. I saw all his certificates. He has even had an interview with this very Governor."

The Dewan pretended to be ignorant of all this.

"It is a good thing," he said, "God has sent us this astrologer. May we not find out from him whether and to what extent we are going to succeed in our mission?" The Maharaja agreed, and asked the astrologer that he should tell him about the future the stars held in store for him. The astrologer took out his note-book and asked for the date of birth of the Maharaja. The Maharaja gave him the details, and the astrologer was in a short time busy drawing up the necessary charts for his predictions. After a while, he looked up, and said to the Maharaja: "The conjunctions here indicate that you are troubled about . . ." He went near the Maharaja and whispered in his ear.

"You are right!" exclaimed the Maharaja. "That is exactly why we are meeting the Governor."

"When are you meeting the Governor?"

"Between six and seven this evening."

"Six and seven!" The astrologer twisted his face, to indicate that there were some serious obstacles.

The Maharaja grew anxious and disturbed.

"You see, Your Highness," the astrologer continued, "I generally don't try to please people by telling them what they wish to hear. In this case, perhaps, you wish to hear from me that you would succeed."

"You mean, there is no chance of success?"

"I don't say that. Nor do the stars and constellations ranged on your side here suggest any such thing. Only. . ."

"What then do you suggest or mean?"

All this while the Dewan had great difficulty in restraining himself.

"You see, Your Highness, certain things succeed only when they are undertaken at the most auspicious hour. And, in this case, the hour fixed today for the interview does not satisfy the necessary conditions."

"Can you tell me when such a favourable hour will occur?"

The astrologer made a few more calculations.

"You are lucky, Your Highness," he said, "tomorrow happens to be the right day. You need not have to stay here long. Tomorrow any time between 4 and 7 p.m.—that is quite a long interval of time—you could see the Governor."

The astrologer was dismissed after a handsome payment of money for his services.

The Dewan drew a longer face than ever. But the Maharaja persuaded him to try to cancel the appointment for the day, and fix one for the day after. There was no time to lose as it was nearing five, and the Dewan rushed at once to make new arrangements. All that he did was to spend an hour roaming about in a cab.

Of course, he could not fail. A handsome present of Rs. 5,000 also came to the Dewan for all his manoeuvres.

## 12. A JOB FOR THE NEPHEW

A young man who had just finished his M.B.B was fortunate enough to have an uncle who knew Ruler of a State, where the services of a medical gradu were needed for a hospital. With the advertisement out from the local daily, the young man went to uncle, and asked for his good offices in securing for h the job in the hospital. The uncle was most solicito and offered to take the nephew with him and introdu him to the Ruler.

He (the nephew) was a sensitive young man, a considerate of others' feelings too. He, therefore, t the uncle that he would not like to cause him any emb rassment and would, therefore, be content even with letter of recommendation. However, the uncle insist that he would intercede personally, and so accomp nied the nephew to the palace, and got an appointme immediately. The interview was to be at 4 p.m. t very same day. In the afternoon the uncle and h graduate nephew accordingly presented themselves the palace at the appointed hour.

The young man had an initial shock when he fou that the Ruler was not at the chamber where he w supposed to receive the uncle. He was further shak to find the Ruler quietly sipping tea with the muc coveted Papitas behind a curtain in the ante-roo Though he knew of the presence of the two callers, h did not offer them tea, but after finishing his own, came leisurely to meet them.

In the meanwhile, the uncle had a difficult time persuading the young man, whose self-respect had been outraged, to stay on. The young man was not prepared to be humbled in the dust and was perfectly willing to risk the loss of a possible job. But the uncle, who belonged to an older generation thought that it would be too rude and risky to depart without meeting the Prince, and he promised the young man that he would tackle the situation in his own way, and make the Ruler realise that his behaviour was not very commendable. The young doctor agreed to stay on rather reluctantly.

When the Ruler came out the uncle introduced the young man as an M.B.B.S. graduate who was seeking a job. More than this he would not say about the boy at the moment, but remarked that he would let the Ruler know all about his qualifications later.

But he talked on without giving the Ruler a chance to put him any questions. He proceeded to narrate things connected with his own family. He was an old man and a good friend of the Ruler, and as such felt that in indulging in casual talk he was not being disrespectful. "Your Highness, God has given me a fairly big house that has enough land for growing trees, flowering plants and fruits. I have a sizable number of cows and buffaloes and there is a well also in the compound."

"I am very happy to learn about this," the Ruler interposed. "And I am sure you could keep your children and grandchildren happy by letting them pick luscious fruits from the trees." With this remark the Ruler had unwittingly given him the very chance he was seeking; and he made full use of it.

"That is just the thought that came into my mind Your Highness," he said, "as I saw you eating thos Papitas with your tea with such relish."

The Ruler winced a bit, but seemed not to be muc affected.

"It occurred to me that I should request you to allo me to pick those seeds so that I may rear trees in m backyard, and let the children enjoy the fruit with the daily tea. So, if Your Highness does not mind it. . .

The Ruler was now thoroughly concerned, an wished to make amends for his lack of courtesy. H told the uncle that he would give him baskets full of th fruit so that his children and grandchildren might ea them to their hearts' content.

"But," persisted the boy's uncle, "I would like them to eat fresh ones from the tree, and there is no deart either of land or labour, of manure or water in th place."

The Ruler suddenly turned the conversation to the object of the interview.

"Now let us have none of this old man. What brought you here, tell me that. This young man here seems to be getting impatient."

The object was explained, and the Ruler asked the young doctor what salary he wished to have.

The doctor replied that he would be happy with an initial Rs. 300, and this was readily conceded.

When the uncle rose to take leave of the Ruler a servant came down with him carrying two baskets full of Papitas.

They would now have enough seeds that could be expected to sprout. And so the uncle decided to drop his request for those other seeds that had fallen from the Ruler's table.

## 13. A LOYAL BROTHER

THE Kathis of Kathiawar have a peculiar custom which incidentally brought into being (in a painles manner) a socialistic order of society. This custom related to marriage and inheritance. Among the Kathi there are the landless ones, and the landed ones, th landowners. But this inequality was sought to be corrected by the rule on the one hand that the daughters o the landless should always be given in marriage to th sons of the landlords, and on the other, that the daughter of the landlords were to be given in marriage always t the sons of those who had no land. Regarding inheritance again the rule was that the property of the fathe should be shared equally by all the sons, and so no la of primogeniture existed even among the Rulers of th Kathi States.

It so happened that there was a Ruler of a Kath State who was deeply worried about this custom. H had two sons and his State was so small that any furthe subdivision of it would mean practical extinction. H was, however, getting old and he felt that the burden of ruling the State should now be borne by the sons He also knew about the innate character of the two sons one was a care-free easy-going lad who did not ver much like the idea of assuming responsibility, though he wished to have the appellation of Ruler for the sake o dignity and prestige. He also knew that the younge son was a capable man and dedicated to the service o the people. So he called his two sons to his presence one day and told them what was in his mind for a long time—that he did not like to see a further division of the State into two parts, and that he wished rather that the State was ruled by one of the two.

The sons were willing to act in accordance with the suggestion of the father. And they told him that he was free to nominate either of the two, and the other would willingly assist him in the task of governing the State.

The father was pleased, and he informed them that the elder son would be named Ruler after his death, but the younger would undertake the administration of the State. This suited the elder brother as much as it suited the younger. The elder was a pleasure-seeking youth who would fain undertake the burden of administration if he could; and the younger, devoted and dedicated as he was, was the sort that is ever willing to shoulder the practical responsibility even though he is not the titular ruler.

Days rolled by. And on the death of the father the arrangement, as agreed to, was put into operation. The idea worked very well for quite some time, with the elder brother enjoying the status of Ruler, and the younger looking after the administration. But such an arrangement was not very convenient to the courtiers who were hoping to exploit the weakness of the elder brother to their own advantage. The younger brother was loyal to the elder, and though the latter evinced no interest in the administration at all, the younger brother consulted him on every matter, and apprised him of everything, so that the elder brother could have no cause to feel that he was being ignored.

The courtiers, however, wanted to drive a wedge between the two brothers, since a state of harmony would not suit their selfish interests. So they began slowly to poison the mind of the titular ruler with stories that hinted at charges such as disloyalty and intrigue. But at the beginning he resisted, as he knew that his younger brother was conducting himself with exemplary honesty and virtue. He refused to believe what he was sure were false and mischievous reports.

But the courtiers were not deterred by these initial setbacks. They devised many a cunning trick, and finally succeeded in sowing the seeds of distrust and suspicion between the two brothers. Shrewd and discerning as the younger brother was, he saw through the game the courtiers were playing, and having become utterly disgusted with the whole affair, he approached the elder brother and plainly told him that the father's arrangement could not continue any longer, and that one of them should rule the country, and that he for his part was willing to entrust the entire administration to him.

The elder brother suggested that they should consult their mother. Now Kathiawar women are known for their wisdom, and are indeed reputed to be wiser than their male counterparts. The mother advised the sons that they should pay no heed to the words of the courtiers, and that they should carry on as before.

The younger brother, however, knew well enough that after all that had happened he would no longer have any peace or security if he continued to govern the State. So one day after a great deal of thought he went to his elder brother with a proposal.

"Brother mine," said he. "I have come to you with a solution to the vexed problem."

He then placed before his elder brother two pills that he had brought: one was poisoned, and the other was not.

"Brother dear," he continued, "I have made up my mind to end my life by swallowing one of these two pills; one of them, I might tell you, is poisoned. However, I must have your permission before I do so."

The elder brother was pained beyond description when he heard these words uttered with such sincerity.

He rose to the occasion. The spirit of self-sacrifice shown by his younger brother had also begun to inspire him.

"Let me suggest another way out of this situation," he said. "Let us place the two pills side by side and let each take his chance. Let the will of God prevail."

The younger brother agreed, because he had his own answer to the problem. The elder insisted on having the first pick. The fateful game was to begin, but the younger one was too quick for the elder; he swallowed both the pills and died immediately. The elder brother was condemned to rule with a heavy conscience for the rest of his life.

## 14. TRAINED CAR-DRIVERS

HARDLY had Indira, daughter of Maharaja Vikramsinghji, reached her thirteenth year when the Maharani started dinning into the ears of her husband that he should busy himself now with hunting for a suitable match for their daughter. Of course a suitable match would mean a Prince from a State that had at least a minimum seventeen gun-salute as stipulated by the British Crown. In those days the power and glory of a State was measured not in terms of either revenue or population but by the number of gun-salutes that the Ruler was permitted by the British Viceroy here in India.

The Maharaja turned now to the Raj Purohit who was the one to be entrusted with all such work. A trusted courtier accompanied the Raj Purohit, and the two made their search, and finally found the most acceptable and eligible bridegroom at the court of the Ruler of Narangpur salute State where they at once struck a bargain. The terms of the bargain were that the bride's father should pay Rs. 3 lakhs in cash as dowry, and Rs. 2 lakhs in jewellery, and more important than either of these, the marriage party should be driven only in cars!

With a dozen brother Princes attending the marriage the Maharaja had to arrange for at least twelve cars. Shuklaji, the Raj Purohit, did his best to persuade the Narangpur Maharaja to drop this condition; but the Maharaja was adamant, and he had to accept the terms.

It appeared that the final 'yes' depended not so much on cash or kind, as on the provision about cars.

When Shuklaji, the Raj Purohit, broke the news to the Maharaja the latter's heart nearly broke. After a while, however, he regained his composure and since the Raj Purohit had struck a very good bargain with a Prince of the required number of gun-salutes he agreed to the proposal. The Raj Purohit described in detail his adventure, the State's ranking, the bridegroom's personality, and the terms of the betrothal. Rupees five lakhs seemed a small price to the Maharaja, as he knew that even for ten lakhs it might be hard to get a Prince from a salute State.

There were other helpful factors: the rains had been in time and the revenues had been collected in full, and so the Maharaja had nothing at all to worry about. The only thing that troubled him was the question of finding twelve cars for the transport of the marriage party.

The first thing to do was to send enquiries to various firms in the larger cities of India to see whether they could provide twelve cars. Of course they could, but that meant waiting for some six or more months for the imports to arrive. The marriage, however, was fixed for an early date.

In this predicament he called, as usual, the Dewan, his trouble-shooter, and consulted him on the question of finding twelve cars for the marriage party. The resourceful Dewan reminded the Maharaja that their relations with the Princely Rulers of Narasinggarh, Bodapur, Shergarh, Kalinggarh, Lakshmanpur, Sitagarh and other States were very cordial, and that there would be no difficulty in borrowing the cars of these Princes for the occasion.

"Borrow the cars?" was the Maharaja's shocked reply. He would not borrow cars on any account, and expose himself to ridicule, which was certain to follow, as soon as the marriage party saw the number plates of other States on the cars. The marriage invitees were all new-comers to the State and he did not want to suffer any ignominy at the very first encounter.

The Dewan knew very well that there was no way out of this situation except the one which he suggested. So he pleaded with the Maharaja that there was nothing wrong in such a deal, and that it was well known that on such occasions elephants, horses and carriages were freely borrowed by Maharajas from one another. As for the number plates which might expose the ownership of the cars, it was a simple matter. "We shall repaint them with our own number plates; that will do the trick," he told the Maharaja, and finally persuaded him to write to the Princes concerned to place their cars at his disposal for the duration of the marriage.

The letters were written and sent to the various Princes, and it appeared that they were only too happy to lend their cars. But then another problem cropped up as it was found that they could not spare their drivers for driving the cars. Those were days when cars were not much in vogue; hence in a rural area it was rather difficult to find trained drivers, in any case not as many as twelve to manage the show.

The Dewan was an old man, old both in age and experience. He was not to be beaten so easily. He let his shrewd mind wander over the possibilities, and at the end came up with a very ingenious solution. The plan was to enlist the services of the youthful officers of the State for the purpose. There were the *Nyayadheesh,* the Police Superintendent, the Doctor, the Revenue Officer and others.

These young officers were promptly summoned to the presence of the Dewan, who told them that the Maharaja wanted the young officers to be seen driving their cars on the occasion of the marriage. And since they did not have cars, the Maharaja had made arrangements to place cars at their disposal during the period.

The cars were at once lent to the officers, and they learnt with enthusiasm how to drive a car. In a week's time they became to all appearance tolerably good and reliable drivers.

The day of the marriage was approaching; the party was expected in a short time. The Maharaja called the officers for a final word of cheer and encouragement. He explained that he wanted them to help him in making the marriage a glorious success. The officers, always imbued with a deep sense of loyalty, were only too happy to do whatever they could on this great occasion.

The Maharaja thanked them for their earnest and the spontaneous gesture of assistance. All that he wanted them to do was to take full responsibility for the comfort of the visiting Princes, and escort them from the station to their *Utaras,* and then take them round in the cars.

The young officers with an eye on their own future thought this a mighty fine opportunity. Each of them would have the signal honour of driving in their cars, the Maharaja or Prince of so and so State, with so many salutes. Who knows what good luck Dame Fortune may shower on them later!

At last the day arrived and the party was at the station. Needless to say, the young *Nyayadheesh* received the Maharaja of Chattarpur, the doctor received the Maharaja of Berhampur with every demonstration of respect, and so on, all were welcomed with royal acclaim.

The party of the bridegroom got much more than what they had bargained for. It was no ordinary chauffeurs who were driving them, but young intelligent officers who relieved the monotony of a slow processional sort of drive with lively conversation interspersed by words of seasoned praise and flattery and goodwill!

Indira, no wonder, became the darling daughter-in-law of the Princely family of Narangpur, and seventeen and more gun-salutes resounded through the skies as she stepped into her new palacial home!

# 15. A ROYAL DISEASE

SABAL SINGH, though a Ruler of a small State, had as a young man a marvellous physique that was the envy of many of his peers. Regular exercise, and an enthusiastic participation in field games calling for much physical stamina and endurance had twisted his sinews and shaped his muscles. But the moment he came to the *Gadi* after the death of his father, he slowly withdrew from these activities that had kept his body in good shape, and took to a life of ease and pleasure. Rich food and a life of indolence soon had their effect on his well-kept body. Unseemly masses of flesh appeared on his torso, and slowly but relentlessly the unseen hand of nature was working its degenerative irreversible processes. However, his early training and exercise had blessed him with a constitution that appeared not to be easily impaired by all this life of sloth and inertia. Yet his friends, and those who knew of the ravages that time can bring about, warned him that he should not remain over-confident about his health, and that he should take at least some vigorous exercise.

It was not very long before he got the shock of his life when he discovered that he had really fallen ill. He began to experience some pain in the stomach, a misfortune that he had never known till then. Naturally he was scared, and he at once called his Dewan and asked him to call in a doctor who could examine him and prescribe a proper medicine. He told the Dewan that he should find a skilled doctor who was conversant with the illnesses of Rulers of States like him, and not a doctor of mediocre quality, the sort that treats the ordinary ailments of common people.

The Dewan proceeded to a neighbouring town, where he came upon a doctor of high repute, whose wife also happened to be a practising doctor. He satisfied himself that the doctor was a very competent man, and that he had a reputation for curing many in the town of complicated illnesses. The Dewan knew the Ruler's whims and fancies to some extent, and so told the doctor that he was not to treat the Ruler as he would his ordinary patients, but to make a thorough examination in a manner befitting a Prince of royal blood. The doctor agreed.

The Ruler was examined thoroughly, and the doctor could find nothing very seriously wrong with the man. He was no doubt an efficient and dependable doctor, but not a shrewd man of the world who knew how to make the best of a rare opportunity. So he told the Ruler frankly that he was not to worry about the pain, which incidentally was just a minor complaint, and that it would disappear after a couple of days of medication. He prescribed the medicine, and left after collecting a modest fee.

The Dewan was summoned again by Sabal Singh who appeared not to be much impressed by the doctor, and his methods. As a Prince his head had been filled with Princely lore concerning various things. He was a Ruler, and as a Ruler naturally, he was not one of common clay. The ailments that afflicted such uncommon clay could not be ordinary ones. He had heard of Rulers having *Rajayakshama*—carbuncle and many other diseases with high-sounding names which visited, by a just dispensation and the mercy of God only the aristocracy and the ruling classes, and never troubled ordinary people. With such ideas flitting across his mind which had already lost its old resilience born of an attendant physical strength, he fancied that the ache in his stomach was no common one, and that it must be something exclusive, aristocratic, the diagnosis of which could only be made by one who was familiar with royal patients.

Another doctor brought by the Dewan also proved unimpressive, for this second doctor, though as competent as the first, if not more, was just as honest as the first doctor, and equally incapable of swindling the vain and gullible rich. The Ruler was thoroughly dissatisfied and asked the Dewan to get one from Bombay where doctors of the highest status could be found. However, having called a second doctor the Ruler did not wish to send him away, and so asked the Dewan to make arrangements for the doctor's stay for some more time, till the opinion of an acknowledged expert from Bombay was obtained by way of confirmation.

The Bombay doctor was a man of great eminence; he had his medical degrees from foreign lands, and naturally he had a sure insight into the diseases of Rulers like Sabal Singh. He brought with him a nurse just in case some urgent operation, or other special attention was needed. He made a thorough examination of every part of the patient's body. As he went through the process of examination, his face slowly changed its hue from one born of a mild concern to one of great anxiety. The Ruler was also not inattentive to this, and perhaps the changing aspect of the doctor's face itself gave him a queer elation. He had at last found a doctor who was worthy of treating men of blue blood and ancient lineage.

The new doctor who was not slow to size up the real nature of the situation informed the Dewan that the other doctors had, of course, come to their own conclusions, and though he did not find anything wrong with their judgment that the Ruler was suffering from within more than indigestion, yet they had not been able to locate the real cause of the malady. It was only natural that they should fumble as they were not specialists in this particular field. He had specialised in such ailments, and more particularly in the ones that troubled Rulers and Princes.

His plan of treatment was very elaborate as befitted a surgeon of his rank. He was to operate on the ruler immediately, and then let his nurse look after him, until another could be got to relieve the first of her duties. The Ruler's case needed watching.

When the Ruler was informed of the doctor's plans, he submitted himself without a murmur to the treatment prescribed. The operation was quickly performed and everyone hoped that the Ruler would soon be rid of the trouble. Unfortunately the next morning the Ruler's temperature rose, and this caused some concern. But the doctor explained that that was a normal consequence of an operation of this nature. When however days passed and the temperature did not show any decline, the Dewan became really anxious. The doctor tried to explain away things, but in the face of the deterioration that was very visible he grew panicky inwardly. The stage was reached when he informed the Dewan that he had to get back as he had just received a telegram asking him to return to Bombay to attend to an urgent case. The telegram, needless to add, was also part of the doctor's repertoire.

The Bombay doctor had a difficult time in getting the Ruler's consent since the local doctor was not willing to take responsibility for the treatment, as he felt that there were complications which needed a specialist's attention. However when the doctor assured the Ruler that he would return in a few days, and till then nothing serious was likely to happen, he was permitted to go with a substantial fee of Rs. 15,000/-.

The local doctor had to do the difficult job of nursing the Ruler back to health. Luckily the Ruler recovered within a few days from the septic wound caused by the expert's handling of the case, thus making it unnecessary for the eminent doctor to return to attend once more to the Ruler's condition, a procedure that might have been as deadly to the Ruler's purse as to his health.

# 16. A FRIEND IN NEED

FOR a number of generations the ancestors of a certain villager had lived in a little hamlet which came under one of the smaller Princely States. Whether these ancestors of the villager bore all the notorious iniquities of the regime with stoic courage, or whether they were blessed with better conditions of living in their time, it is hard to say. But that they had stuck to their native village with the tenacity and love characteristic of a Jat was evident. But for this particular villager in question it was a different matter. He could not put up with the never-ending stresses and strains caused by the misdeeds of insolent officers, who made all kinds of demands on him—sometimes asking him to do odd jobs in their houses, carry burdens to the station when they camped out, and supply free of charge much of the produce that he grew on the land. If he refused to comply with their orders and requests, they came down with a heavy hand on him, and used all the penal powers they had under the peculiar set-up to cause great harassment to him.

The villager had carried on somehow but it was now becoming clear that life would no longer be tolerable in the village. His wife and two children suffered a lot and he could not even provide them with the barest needs. When they were ill he could not even attend to them as he was called away on some pretext or other. Life was a veritable burden. At last he decided to flee from the village, and settle down in some other neighbouring place hoping that he might be better off there.

His belongings were but few; hardly a cartload. He got them bundled up overnight, and planned to start early on a rainy day, hoping thereby not to attract too much attention from his neighbours. He started rather early as he also wished to be in the next village before the day's work began. He had travelled far, and was now on the outskirts of the nearest village, when his cart bogged down in the mud. He got off, and tried to goad his ox to move. He tried by coaxing it, then by mildly whipping it, and finally by using every other known method, good and bad. He put his hand to the wheel that had got stuck, thus urging the ox to pull harder. But do what he might, the cart would not move. For quite some time he struggled with the wheel but time was running out, and he saw no hope of extricating his cart and also himself from an intractable situation. He now wondered whether his attempt to get away from the village would succeed, and whether he would not have to do a lot of explaining to his people when he returned. He did not call for help from others for the same reason; he did not wish to excite curiosity.

When he was in this desperate condition, he saw at a distance someone coming in his direction. The man's clothes were very simple. He could not make out who the stranger was. And though he was obviously from his own place, he could not recollect having seen the man before.

"What made you choose this day for your journey, friend?" the stranger asked.

The villager looked at the man in surprise and dismay. Not only was he stuck in the mud, here was further annoyance, and perhaps more trouble to come because of the discovery. He, therefore, thought it best to remain silent. "I shall help you, or get you more aid that will pull you out of this predicament. But may I know what made you choose this rainy day? Are you out for some relative's marriage in a neighbouring village?"

The villager was unable to hold his peace any longer. He was a simple and straightforward man, and so he disclosed to the stranger the causes that provoked the strange exodus on condition that he would tell nobody about it. The stranger listened with rapt attention and real sympathy.

"But could you not complain to the Ruler of the State if such is the cause of your departure?" the stranger once again asked him.

"How could I do that, my friend?"

"Why not? Is not the Ruler of the State there to hear the petitions of his subjects?"

"I do not know about that, my friend. Besides, how will my complaints reach him when they have to pass through the very officers who are harassing me? What guarantee is there that the officers will not misrepresent things, and make my condition even worse?"

The stranger was moved by the story. He asked the villager whether he would be willing to return to the village if he promised to help him to set things right.

By now the villager's interest and curiosity were fully roused. He wished to know who his benefactor was.

But the stranger insisted on the villager returning first if he wanted to know about his identity.

The villager decided to return, hoping that the stranger whose tone was sincere, and had the ring of authority, would be able to remove his grievances. As he walked back with his cart which had now been extricated, the stranger threw off his disguise. The villager was both shocked and overjoyed to learn that the stranger was none other than the Ruler himself.

It needs no telling that the Ruler did reform and improve his administration, for he realised that he had too long relied on the advice and information of his counsellors and officers who, it was now obvious, had grossly misled him.

## 17. A MARRIAGE GIFT FROM A RULER

VADILAL was known for his wit and smartness and had made himself popular among the many Rulers of Saurashtra. His main business was to do odd jobs for them, to meet high British and Indian officials and keep these in good humour. There was no mission in which Vadilal had failed. He had thus earned the gratitude of many of the Rulers.

So, when Vadilal's son was getting married, he sent letters of invitation to all the Rulers of Saurashtra, both known and unknown to him. Some of them attended the marriage personally and gave costly presents to the bridegroom. Some others sent congratulatory messages and money orders. Some gave more money, some less as befitting their status.

But one of the Rulers whom he knew well either forgot or deliberately decided not to send any present, or even a token of good wishes. Vadilal was very upset, even distressed by this remissness. How dare the Ruler slight him thus? But instead of writing an angry letter of rebuke or reproach, he decided to bide his time.

Some months later, the wife of the erring Ruler was taken ill. The doctors diagnosed the case as appendicitis and advised an early operation. There was only a small ill-equipped hospital in that town. So, it was decided to take the Rani Saheba to Rajkot where a good surgeon was available.

As the Ruler had no house of his own in Rajkot, he requested one of his brother-Rulers to allow him the use of his house in the town for the duration. This was readily agreed to, and instructions were sent to Vadilal to place the house in Rajkot at the disposal of the Ruler, whenever he came there for his wife's treatment.

Vadilal decided that this was his chance to teach the Ruler a lesson, and got busy.

On the day the Ruler was due to arrive, Vadilal went to the *utara* (as rulers' houses were known), asked the chowkidar to clean the rooms, had the furniture dusted, put fresh linen on the beds, and so got the house ready. By 5.30 p.m. on the day of the Ruler's arrival everything was spick and span.

Vadilal then asked the chowkidar to lock up the rooms and hand over the keys to him.

But the chowkidar protested, "Sir, the Darbar Saheb is arriving at 8 o'clock. There are hardly three hours to go. Why not leave the keys with me?"

"Certainly not," snapped Vadilal. "I have personally supervised all these arrangements, and I do not want anybody to disturb them. I am myself going to receive the Darbar Saheb and bring him here."

So saying, Vadilal went home with the keys.

The train arrived, and the Darbar Saheb alighted from a first class reserved compartment accompanied by two of his servants. The Rani Saheba, accompanied by two maid servants, also alighted from the ladies' compartment.

The Darbar Saheb did not see anybody at the station who had come to receive him. His servants ran up and down the platform to find out if Vadilal or anybody else had come. But they could not find anyone.

The Darbar Saheb was very much annoyed, and wondered why Vadilal had not come to meet him.

Anyway, it was no use wasting time on the platform, or getting ruffled or excited because of Vadilal's negligence of his duty especially as the Rani Saheba was feeling fatigued after the railway journey. They engaged a *tonga,* placed the luggage in it, and went to the *utara.* But to his chagrin the Darbar Saheb found the rooms locked while the chowkidar did not have the keys with him.

The Rani Saheba was now feeling severe spasms of pain and needed immediate rest. The poor chowkidar apologised for the inconvenience, but the Darbar Saheb had no use for verbal apologies.

"Where is Vadilal gone?" he angrily asked the chowkidar. "Why have you not kept the rooms open when you know that we were to come this evening? Why did he not come to receive us?"

The poor chowkidar related how Vadilal had come, and personally supervised all the arrangements, and had gone home with the keys, saying that he was going to the station to receive the Darbar Saheb. Why Vadilal had not come he did not know, and it was not his fault. In the meantime Rani Saheba's pain increased, and the chowkidar brought his broken *charpai* (cot) with loud protestations of inadequacy and offered it to the Rani Saheba to rest.

Then he raced to Vadilal's house to fetch the keys, where he saw Vadilal; he told him how angry and upset the Darbar Saheb was. Vadilal heard him coolly. He asked the chowkidar to have his meal, if he had not eaten already. But the chowkidar, who had seen how furious the Darbar Saheb was had no appetite for food just then.

He took the keys, and immediately returned to the *utara*. The Darbar Saheb was, of course, pleased with the arrangements, but still could not understand why Vadilal failed to turn up. It was so out of character. He inquired of the chowkidar, who said Vadilal did not give him any explanation except to express regret that he could not reach the station in time on account of illness.

Next day, early in the morning, with his leg bandaged, and badly limping, Vadilal came to the *utara*, leaning heavily on a stick and uttering groans of distress. When the Darbar Saheb saw the man thus stagger into his presence, his anger subsided and he enquired gently what was wrong.

Vadilal replied: "I broke my leg last night, Your Highness, and it is very painful. That is why I could not come to the station, and I feel very sorry for the inconvenience".

The Darbar Saheb asked him how this had occurred. Vadilal replied that it was no use having a postmortem over what had happened. He could not forgive himself for the worry and distress he had caused to the Darbar Saheb. But the latter insisted on knowing how he met with the accident, "We have a wretched custom in our community," Vadilal replied. "At the time of the marriage of a son or daughter we build a *mandap*."

"But we too have the same practice," the Darbar Saheb said, "and there is nothing risky about it. It is a very delightful job; on the other hand, it is very very fascinating."

"But along with the *mandap*," said Vadilal, "we also have a small pillar known as *manek sthambha* which once set up can only be removed on an auspicious date.

"According to my wife, this auspicious *muhurta* had not yet come and so the *sthambha* was still there. Yesterday in the darkness, I stumbled on it in my hurry to reach the station, and broke my leg. Immediately I asked my wife to remove this *sthambha*, which had become a danger but my wife would not allow it to be removed. She said we had to call a Brahmin for the purpose.

"The Brahmin was immediately called. But then there was another hitch. My wife declared that our custom prohibited the removal of the *sthambha* unless all the people to whom we had sent out invitations, had given us some present or other.

"Immediately I took out the list of invitees and checked it to find which of them had not sent any presents. When I got the names, I borrowed money from my wife, and credited each of the men with amounts varying according to their status.

"There were six or seven of them. If the man was a Ruler I credited Rs. 501/-, and if he was a commoner, Rs. 5. If he was of middle-rank I credited Rs. 51/. There were about 1,500 people on the list, and it took me a very long time to go through it. And when at last I went to bed, I could not sleep thinking of the trouble caused to my Darbar Saheb. In my anger, I even prayed to God that all kinds of misery might befall these defaulters, who were the real causes of my inability to go to the station to meet Your Highness".

The Darbar Saheb then recollected that he himself was among the defaulters. The very next day he sent his *Kārbhāri* with Rs. 501 as wedding gift from the Darbar Saheb, and asked him to explain to Vadilal that the reason for the failure to send any present was his pre-occupation with the Rani Saheba's illness.

# 18. AN HONEST OFFICER'S DOWNFALL

IN THE DAYS of the British even the smallest princeling in Kathiawar, who was directly under the suzerainty of the British Crown, was recognised as a Ruler. There were many such Rulers recognised under the Government of India Act, who had an income of less than Rs. 1,000 a year, and who were not allowed to exercise any power or authority, civil or criminal, in their tiny little States.

One such State was under about 30 joint Rulers and for the administration of this State the British authorities used to appoint an Administrator, who exercised jurisdiction on behalf of all the Rulers. The Rulers had very often to deal with this officer, and they always tried to keep him favourably disposed towards them.

It was customary among these Rulers to send vegetables, fruit, milk and other small gifts to such officers. These gifts enabled the Darbars to get things done more quickly.

Once a very young officer was appointed as Administrator of the State in question. He was a person, with a high sense of duty, and strict in his behaviour.

On the day of his arrival, all the Rulers came to greet him, and brought with them gifts of flowers, fruits, vegetables etc., but the officer firmly refused to accept anything except the flowers.

The Rulers were rather upset. They wanted to make friends with the new officer, but from the officer's attitude on the very first day, they feared that they would not be able to win his goodwill easily.

The officer had no bad habits or weaknesses except that he was fond of tea. That was the only beverage he was addicted to. One characteristic feature of the place was that everybody in that area had his own milch cattle, and nobody used to buy or sell milk.

According to the tradition prevailing among these Darbars, selling milk was considered below their dignity, as cattle was not considered a source of wealth. Rather, the maintenance of a cow was looked upon as a pious duty. So, when the officer sent his servant around the village to buy some milk, nobody was willing to sell any. When some of the Darbars learnt that the officer was in need of milk, they sent jugfuls to the officer with their compliments.

The officer, however, refused to accept a free gift of milk. He insisted on paying for it.

Ultimately the Darbars agreed, very reluctantly though, to receive payment for the milk supplied. So the officer sent his servant thenceforth to one or the other of the Darbars for his daily supply of milk.

The first two days, they sent him pure milk. On the third day they had an idea. They put a small dose of opium in the milk with the result that the officer found that when the milk for tea came from this particular source, the tea caused delightful sensations. Every time he had tea or milk, he found himself more active, elated and agile because of the opium in the milk.

The Darbars used to inquire of the servant about the effect of the milk on the officer, and they were told that after drinking his tea, he was always very good humoured and lively. On the eighth day the Darbars did not supply the usual milk, saying that their cows had not given any milk that day, and so the poor man had an uneasy restless time. He had pain in his legs and all over the body, and he felt very ill.

Since the Darbars pretended that they had no milk his servant went to some other house to get the daily milk, but as might be expected this milk did not have the usual dose of opium mixed with it. The tea bereft of opium did not give a fraction of the joy or satisfaction which the officer used to derive when his milk was brought from the Darbars. So he kept insisting that the milk should be obtained from one of the Darbars, while the Darbars continued to plead their inability to provide any. The man was utterly wretched in mind.

But after some days had passed, the Darbars resorted to an even cleverer trick. They resumed the supply of milk but with an increasingly larger dose of opium every day so that in about a fortnight's time the officer became a confirmed opium addict.

When the Darbars realized that the officer had reached a stage when he could not tolerate the withdrawal of opium, they stopped supply of milk once more. This time the officer's condition sank to the very depths of misery. He tried desperately every possible kind of treatment suggested to him, but all to no purpose. When he had given up hope, the Darbars suggested that they had a home-made remedy which was certain to cure him. The unhappy man agreed readily to try it.

The Darbars then quietly gave him a strong dose of liquid opium without telling him what it was. Within a couple of hours the officer recovered his usual spirits as if by magic, and was again his former confident self. He continued this medicine for two more days, and asked the Darbars the name of the medicine so that he could buy it in the bazaar.

The Darbars, however, told him that it was not on sale freely, and that not everybody would be able to get it. After a good deal of persuasion and insistence on the part of the officer, the Darbars told him the whole story; the medicine which had kept him so fit and active was nothing but opium. The officer was shocked on hearing this, but by then his addiction to opium had become so complete that it was impossible to give up the habit.

Every morning and evening, he called the Darbars, and had his dose of opium ceremonially with them. The Darbars were thus able to keep him in friendly and familiar terms. He could not pass a single day without taking opium in their company. Thus the unfortunate young man fell a prey to the scheming Darbars, and ever after they could get him to do anything they wanted.

## 19. MAHARAJA'S TRIP ABROAD

THE Maharaja seemed dejected. Generally he was jovial and full of fun.

The Dewan had come with some important office work, but for nearly ten minutes the Maharaja did not even look at him. The Dewan wondered at this gloomy mood of the Maharaja which was so unusual. At last he mustered enough courage, and asked him in as meek a voice as possible if there was anything wrong with his health.

The Maharaja frowned. "Why do you disturb me?" he asked brusquely. "You have your way, I shall have mine."

The Dewan was at his wit's end what to do. During the 15 years that he was Dewan, this was the first time that such a curt and sour exchange had taken place between them.

However, the Dewan was a shrewd man. He had served three generations of Princes, and had risen from the ordinary rank of treasurer to that of Dewan. He knew the whims and moods of Maharajas. Thinking it wise and discreet not to enter into any further discussion with the Maharaja at the time, he took leave of his master quietly, and went away.

But he was also very unhappy as he could not find out the cause of the Maharaja's displeasure. He thought and thought over it, but could not think of any incident which could have possibly upset him.

The Dewan called the favourite courtiers of the Maharaja, and asked them why the Maharaja was so morose. While they could not explain exactly why this was so they confessed that they too had seen that for the past three days the Maharaja was not his usual self. They had heard that three days back he had called the treasurer, but what transpired between the two they did not know. They could only say that ever since that meeting the Maharaja could be seen losing his temper over very trifling things.

The Dewan made further enquiries, and discovered that for some days before then the Maharaja was planning to go on a tour of Europe.

The Dewan at once connected the two—the treasurer's visit, and the foreign tour. He immediately called the treasurer, and asked him what passed between him and the Maharaja.

The Dewan was a strict disciplinarian, and a very hard taskmaster. He wanted every head of department to inform him of everything that might be happening in the man's department, and more particularly about any direct contact the Ruler might have had with any head of a department. The treasurer at once thought that for him doomsday had arrived. The Dewan would sack him when he learnt that he had met the Maharaja, and failed to bring the fact to his notice. But he also knew that if he concealed the truth, and the Dewan came to know about it later (which he was sure to do), he would be very severely punished. He, therefore, decided to tell the truth.

He told the Dewan that a few days back he was summoned by the Maharaja and was asked to arrange for His Highness a sum of rupees two lakhs immediately for a trip to Europe. The treasurer told the Dewan that as there was a balance of only Rs. 1.5 lakhs in the treasury, that is, hardly enough to tide over the next three months, he had to say "sorry" as gently as possible to the ruler.

The Dewan, who had decided to dismiss the treasurer for not confiding in him, softened a little in view of the sense of duty shown by the treasurer.

He told the treasurer, "I am glad that you had the courage to explain to the Maharaja your inability to give him two lakhs of rupees, but should you not have informed me about it?"

The treasurer heaved a sigh of relief at the manner in which the Dewan had responded to his explanation, and added with some hesitation, "I am sorry, Sir, for my mistake, but the Maharaja had ordered me not to tell you."

The Dewan was perturbed by the story. The State treasury was nearly empty. The Maharaja evinced no interest in the administration of the State. His sole interest was in visiting Europe and enjoying himself.

But he also knew the Maharaja's nature. The Maharaja was an obstinate man. Once he had decided to go, he would go at any cost. And, therefore, it was no use telling him that there was no money in the treasury. He had to find a way of getting the money, and this without annoying the tax payer. How could that be done?

The Dewan with his usual ingenuity, hit upon a plan.

The State had a railway of its own, nearly 80 miles long. It did not bring much revenue. The Dewan thought of turning it into a profitable investment for the time being so that he could give the Maharaja the much-needed Rs. 2 lakhs.

He called one of his trusted servants, and asked him to pose as a *sanyasi,* who had magical powers to cure all diseases with the aid of divine water. The course of treatment was to last for one month.

Due publicity was given to the new *sanyasi* by the State. All sorts of facilities were also given to persons desiring to visit the *sanyasi.* Taxis, buses, tongawalas, hoteliers and small traders were given every incentive. Within a few days, the whole village began to hum with excitement and activity and thousands of men, women and children thronged the place every day.

The trains were crowded to overflowing; five extra trains had to be run every day. Even then the railway could not cope with the rush, since there were not enough bogies left to run more trains. The railway was thus authorised to run open wagons if people did not mind the discomfort. The anxiety to find a cure was so pressing that people were only too willing to travel even in open wagons. About 15,000 to 20,000 people made the trip back and forth, a journey that yielded Rs. 20,000 to the railway every day, and earned a daily net profit of Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 12,000.

The Dewan, who pretended that he knew nothing about the conference the Maharaja had earlier with the treasurer, then went to the Maharaja, and apologised for the annoyance caused to him.

He, however, took care to add, "If only Your Highness had mentioned to me your desire to visit Europe, I would have arranged the necessary funds." Having prepared the ground in this way, he finally revealed to the Maharaja the story of the bogus *sanyasi* and how he had master-minded the whole plan.

By the time the day for the Maharaja's departure to Europe arrived, the State treasury had a net balance of Rs. 5 lakhs, more than twice the amount needed for the royal tour.

And His Highness proceeded to Europe in a happy and tranquil mood—thanks to an ingenious and obliging Dewan.

And who knows? Many illnesses might really have been cured in the process. Many illnesses are cured naturally; many more are cured by the sheer power that faith can create. We in India are always willing to give a *sanyasi* the benefit of the doubt. The Dewan might have played a trick on the people. But the Dewan's conscience would be clear if he remembered that much good might unwillingly have accrued.

## 20. THE LONG-DRAWN LITIGATION

*(The suit—to decide whose son it was—dragged for 30 long years!)*

**'G'** was a Talukdar of a small estate. He had a young son, the only one he had. This son died at the age of 20, leaving behind a young widow.

As G had no other issue, all the co-parceners had a covetous eye on the estate of G, after whose death they hoped to get the *Giras* in succession. G was, however, anxious to have a son from material as well as religious considerations. He did not want his estate to go to outsiders, and also wanted a son who would perform religious rites for the peace of his soul.

In those days, however, small Rulers were not allowed to adopt a son unless special permission was granted by the British Government and such permission was generally not granted. G did not try to get any special exemption.

In course of time, intimacy developed between G and his son's young widow. The whole village was agog with rumours. Some time later it became known to the people of the village that G's son's widow was with child.

The co-parceners when they heard about this, lost no time in making an application to the Political Agent, stating that G's son's widow was expecting a child, and that if a son was born to the widow, it was very likely that G would pass off that son as his own, born to his own wife, though it was impossible that G's wife would give birth to a child after a lapse of 25 years.

The Political Agent, however, rejected the application.

Later on G planned to go on a pilgrimage with his wife and son's widow. The idea was to disappear from public view about a month before confinement. If the new born baby was a boy, then he would return after three or four months, and announce that his own wife had given birth to a baby boy.

In those days, although the Rulers were named and styled Rulers, they were really vassals of the British Government. Even freedom of movement was denied to them. If they had to leave Kathiawar for a period of more than 15 days, they had to obtain the permission of the Political Agent to go out of Kathiawar.

The co-parceners were keen-sighted and alert. They could see through G's game and immediately put in a joint application to the Political Agent, saying that G was not really going on a pilgrimage; his whole idea was to be away till the widow was delivered of a baby. And if the baby happened to be a boy he would declare that boy to be his own son. In view of this, the petitioners contended, G should not be allowed to go out of Kathiawar.

When the Political Agent received this second application, he naturally thought that the matter was really serious,. and prohibited G from going on a pilgrimage.

G had, therefore, to think of another plan. So along with his wife and son's widow, he went to his own father-in-law's house in another small village. Being a big man, he had a hold over the village, and could do what he liked. No permission was necessary from the Political Agent also, as the village was situated in Kathiawar itself.

G confided to his father-in-law his plan, and got the latter's approval. When the widow gave birth to a baby it happened to be a boy. G promptly got the birth registered in the village Birth Register stating the boy to be his own son, born of his own wife. Thus, he had the first piece of evidence created in his favour.

The co-parceners, who were keeping a watchful eye on G and his family got the information in no time about the reported birth of the son to the widow of G's son, and also about the birth having been registered in the village Birth Register as G's own son, born to his own wife. They immediately made yet another application to the Political Agent, referring to their previous applications and stating how their prediction had actually come true. In conclusion, they requested the Political Agent to take the necessary action immediately.

The Political Agent did not know what steps he could take, because he was only exercising political jurisdiction. But after appreciating the importance and the consequences of any birth of a son to G, he immediately ordered that a Government lady doctor should medically examine both the widow and G's wife, and ascertain which of the two had really given birth to the baby.

In those days communications were difficult. There were no proper roads, and no cars. One had to travel long distances by bullock cart and it used to take two or three days to cover a distance of 30 to 40 miles.

Although the Political Agent had passed the orders immediately for a medical examination, the lady doctor could not reach the place for a whole week. The co-parceners, who stood the risk of losing the estate in case the baby was passed off as G's legitimate son, were only too anxious to give all possible help to the lady doctor. One of the co-parceners had a tonga, and he made it available to her, besides providing her with two armed escorts. The Government itself provided a sub-inspector of police as her personal guard. Thus the tonga carrying the lady doctor, the sub-inspector and the two armed escorts at last reached the village belonging to G's father-in-law.

In those days, a horse-drawn tonga was a rarity in such a small village. Children playing in the outskirts of the village collected round the tonga and there was great excitement. Almost immediately news reached the village that some Government officials and a lady doctor had come to the village under the orders of the Political Agent.

G, seeing all this, at once sized up the situation. It was the eighth day after the delivery. They asked the widow to move out of her bed, and her place was taken by the wife, who pretended to be the mother of the new born baby.

When the lady doctor came, she found 'the mother' and the baby in the bed, and the widow moving about in a normal way. But the lady doctor would not take things at their face value. She was under orders of the Political Agent, and demanded that both the women should sumbit themselves to a medical examination.

G and his father-in-law tried in vain to dissuade the lady doctor from carrying out her professed intention. They argued that it was a question of the honour, reputation and prestige of their family, and that she could not possibly disbelieve their statements.

The police inspector came to the rescue of the lady doctor; he warned G and his father-in-law that in case they obstructed the doctor in doing her official duty, the estate of both of them would be confiscated by the Government.

Normally, the Kathis are a brave, spirited people, but in the face of the Political Agent's orders and the threat that their estates might be confiscated, they became as docile as lambs.

Ultimately, the two women were examined by the lady doctor, who found that it was the son's widow who had been delivered of the baby. The sub-inspector, in order to complete the formalities, recorded the statements of both the ladies.

The co-parceners were mightily pleased when they learnt about this. They had succeeded in thwarting the selfish designs of G; and following on their success they immediately made another application to the Political Agent, requesting him to declare that the newly born baby boy was not G's legitimate son.

The Political Agent, however, replied that the question whether the newly born baby was the legitimate son of G and his rightful heir, did not arise for the present. In a legally worded order he said, "the succession issue opens only on the death of G; they may, therefore, take up the question at the proper time."

The co-parceners were greatly disappointed. They tried in vain to impress upon the Political Agent the need to declare 'that son' as an illegitimate child of G, and to issue an order that he would not be allowed to inherit the estate of G. The Agent refused to comply with their request. There was nothing to do, therefore, except to wait till G's death.

In the meantime G tried to create all kinds of evidence to support his stand that the child was his legitimate son. He performed as many religious and social ceremonies as could possibly be gone through as enjoined by custom beginning with *Nāmkarana saṁskār*. He also performed seven or eight other religious rites, sending out every time letters and invitations while keeping a record of persons present at these ceremonies, and an account of presents and gifts received from various relatives, including his own father-in-law, who gave ornaments and clothes both to the son and the mother (wife of G). The account books of the cloth merchants and goldsmiths were got properly drawn up to show that the cloth and ornaments were purchased for religious and social engagements concerning G's ostensible child, and copies of these documents were prepared and kept ready. In the village school register also the father's name was that of G.

When the boy was about seven years of age, he was admitted to a well-known college. The boy was bright, clever, industrious, and had the makings of a good sportsman. He became the pet student of the principal, an Englishman. In those days an Englishman, whatever the position he held in India, had always a great pull with other British officials. Off and on the principal would speak about the boy to the Political Agent in terms of praise and plead his case. When the boy was about 15 years of age, G died. The co-parceners got busy again, and then brought a political suit, claiming G's estate and asking for a declaration that the boy was not the legitimate son of G.

By then fifteen long years had passed, and many things had happened. The lady doctor who had examined the two women had died, and therefore, the co-parceners could not produce her as a witness. The statements of the ladies recorded by the sub-inspector of police were not considered valid on the ground that they were made before a police officer.

On the other hand, a whole mass of evidence, namely the entry in the Birth Register, the school register, the college register, and the account books of the goldsmiths and cloth merchants, the invitations, the records of gifts and presents received during various ceremonies was produced on behalf of the other side.

The Political Agent, on the strength of all this decided that the boy was the legitimate son of G. The co-parceners were thus worsted in the legal battle in spite of the fact that from the very beginning they had striven their hardest to prevent G's illegitimate son being declared his heir.

What an end!

As a final desperate measure they preferred an appeal to the Judicial Commissioner. It must be said to their credit that English judicial officials were not open to pressure or influence. On the merits of the case, the Court held that the son was an illegitimate child, and was not entitled to succeed to G's estate.

By this time, however, the boy was no longer a mere boy; he had grown up to become a man with a wife and child and was living in a style befitting a Talukdar.

Taking all these facts into consideration, the Judicial Commissioner's Court decided that it would be a great hardship if the boy was thrown out at this stage.

Therefore, the Court ordered that, although he was not entitled to succeed to G's estate, a grant of Rs. 5,000 a month should be made to him for life.

Thus ended the long drawn litigation extending over a period of 30 years.

## 21. ALL WELL ACCORDING TO THE TIMES

THE 21-year old Maharajah had just succeeded his father. He wanted that his administration should be neat, clean and efficient. There was practically no large scale corruption except that small clerks demanded rupees five, junior officers Rs. 50 and senior officers Rs. 500. People did not consider this as corruption, because they willingly parted with the money for getting their work done which, of course, was actually done. The delays in disposal varied from a month to six months, but this also could be curtailed in proportion to the amount given and still the people were not unhappy.

People belonging to the older generation, who had never indulged in these malpractices were pained to see the moral standards going down, but they could hardly do anything because anyone who wanted his work to be done, willingly gave bribes. The officers took this as a routine feature of the administration. What is wrong, they thought, if people willingly appreciated their services.

The young ruler was anxious to know how neat and efficient his administration was in comparison with that of his father and grandfather. Once he sent for the oldest man in the town and asked him, "Grand Sire, you are nearing your century, is it true?" The old man with folded hands replied, "Yes, Bapu (Bapu was a term of address for the Rulers). I have completed four scores and only five remain to complete the fifth score. But I am not quite sure whether I shall do it or not."

Even at the age of 95, the old man could stand erect, his eyesight was fairly good. His voice was firm and clear and he could hear quite well. The Maharajah was impressed by the physical fitness of the man at this age but wanted to test his mental fitness too. He, therefore, asked him if he remembered when the Maharajah's great father died, when his grandfather died and several other questions. The old man answered all these questions quite correctly.

The Maharajah then asked him, "Good old grand man, you have seen the days of my grandfather, my father and you are also seeing the days of my administration. Which of these periods you think to be good for the subjects?"

The old man was a bit puzzled. He did not know what reply he should give. He had seen the old days of the Maharajah's grandfather, when officials of the State went out of the way to help the people without expecting a single paisa. They did their jobs as part of their duty.

In the time of the Maharajah's father things had deteriorated. The officers did not ask for any money but if the work was done and people willingly gave them something in kind or cash, they accepted it. But the people were even then happy because they willingly gave whatever they wanted to give without being asked to do so.

In the present time, officers demanded money for doing the same kind of work for which he had never had to pay anything before, and yet people were not unhappy. The old man thought that if he were to say that the Maharajah's administration was corrupt he would perhaps be angry. If he did not say so, he would not be telling the truth. He was therefore hesitating to give any reply.

The Maharajah could easily find out the hesitation on the part of the old man to give a reply. He therefore told him, "Old man, don't think I will be angry if you tell me your frank opinion. If my administration is good, say so; if not, frankly tell me what is wrong with it. I want to know your frank opinion backed by your experience."

The old man was slightly emboldened by these words of the Maharajah. But could he really trust his words? Would any man be prepared to hear unpalatable truth and more so, a ruler? What happens if the ruler is offended? At this age his life may become miserable. He therefore thought twice before he replied. At the same time, he did not want to give a wrong opinion. He thought he would be doing disservice to the people if he, for the sake of pleasing the Maharajah, gave a wrong opinion and praised the ruler's administration. The old man though not educated in any school or college, had robust commonsense. He had wide and varied experience of men and matters. He, therefore, without saying whether the Maharajah's regime was better or worse than that of his father or grandfather, replied, "Bapu, I have seen your grandfather's days. They were indeed good and people were happy with the State administration. I have also seen your father's regime and there also people were happy. And now I am seeing your regime. It is also good according to the times."

The Maharajah did not understand what the old man wanted to convey by the words "according to the times". He asked the old man to clarify what he meant by the words "also good according to the times".

The old man said, "Sir, I am not an educated person. I am only a rustic villager. I cannot explain any further what I mean by the words *also good according to the times*. I can only say that each administration—whether your grandfather's or your father's or your's, was or is as good as good can be *according to the times*."

But the ruler was not satisfied with the reply. He wanted the old man to say categorically whether his administration was better than his father's and grandfather's or not.

The more the ruler insisted, the more the old man hesitated. Ultimately he said, "Bapu, I cannot explain in detail what I mean but I will tell you my own experience to illustrate what I mean."

"Bapu, when I was quite young, my parents took me to the local annual fair. You know Bapu, this fair is the largest one held in any of the neighbouring villages. Men, women and children come on foot, or by bullock-carts from far off villages. In the evening when we were returning home from the fair, my mother saw a small girl of seven, clad in rich clothes and wearing valuable ornaments on her person. The girl was weeping bitterly and crying 'Ma-Ma-Ma'. My mother seeing the girl alone, lifted her in her arms and tried to console her. The girl would not stop crying for her mother. My mother gave her some sweets and went round the fair in search of the girl's mother, but she could not find her. We, therefore, brought the girl home and told her that we shall soon find out her mother and hand her over to her mother. The girl after some time fell asleep. Next morning when she woke up, she began to cry. My mother consoled her and asked her father's and mother's name and the village from which she came. This time the girl told her father's name and village. Immediately we took our bullock-cart, and went to that village about 10 miles from our place, and handed over the girl to her parents, who were mightily pleased at the recovery of the girl and her safe arrival with all the gold ornaments. It was noon by that time and they offered us meals and ten rupees as a token of their gratitude. My parents refused to accept anything; on the contrary they gave the child five rupees. It was with great hesitation that the girl accepted this present from us. My parents never for a minute thought they were obliging the girl's parents by entrusting the girl to them with the rich clothes and valuable ornaments. It was their duty, they thought, to do so. I was just 10 years old but I still remember the incident very vividly. This was during your grandfather's regime.

"After about 50 years, in the time of your father, a similar incident happened at the fair. A young girl with valuable ornaments on her person was seen alone by a man. He caught hold of her, gave her sweets, and asked her name and address. This time the man who found the girl, took away all the ornaments and quietly left the girl at the door of the parents house. The parents were happy to see their girl alive. They said after all they had got their child, and did not worry about the ornaments. It was good of the man to have spared the child. He could as well have killed her and robbed her of the ornaments also. Thus, the parents were not quite unhappy at the loss of the ornaments. On the contrary, they were happy to get back the girl safe.

"Recently I learnt of a similar instance where a young man of 16 found a girl of 13 attired in similar rich clothes and ornaments. He took her home and induced her to marry him. And after marriage he informed the parents of the girl that they should not worry about her. She was quite safe and happy and had already married a young man.

"The parents said, "What a great relief! the girl is married! A great botheration is off our heads."

"Sir, thus each time whatever happened made the parents of the girls happy. The recovery of the girl along with ornaments made the girl's parents happy 90 years ago, the recovery of the girl without the ornaments also made the parents happy 30 years ago, and the marriage of the girl with an unknown youth also made the parents of the girl happy in recent times. Thus, everything becomes good according to the times.

"Your grandfather's rule was good according to the moral standards in those days, your father's rule was also good as per standards of his days, and now also things are good as judged by the present-day standards."

The Maharajah understood what the old man wanted to convey, and started taking measures to improve the moral standards of his subjects.

## 22. SOUND ADVICE

RAJAH'S Darbars are well known for petty intrigues. The bigger the State, greater were the intrigues. Darbar Chandrasinhji's was a smaller State, but nonetheless intrigues there were as many as in a bigger State. The rivalry between the officers, the courtiers, and the Ranis, was usually of the same nature. Each one vied with the other to win the favours of the Rajah. The junior officer tried to please the Rajah by showing that he was more obedient and faithful to the Rajah than his seniors. Mornings and evenings, he would go for the *salams*, speak a few chosen good phrases in praise of the ruler and in between add some words indirectly deprecating one or the other action of the superior officers. If the Rajah had entrusted some work in the morning, he would carry it out by the evening and report compliance within a few hours adding had he done as suggested by his superior officer, it would have taken several days. The Ranis, whose number was invariably more than one, tried to please the ruler by looking after the minutest details of the Rajah's taste. If the Rajah was fond of certain dishes, each of the Ranis would herself prepare that dish for the Rajah. Similarly, the courtiers too tried to win the favours of the Rajah by telling nice stories, eulogising him, praising his administration, his generosity and so forth.

Chandrasinhji was a shrewd ruler. He understood all these methods, and tried to keep everybody in his proper place and making each one believe that each one was a man of his confidence. There was however one physician who had no rival. He was also a shrewd statesman, besides being a good Vaidya. Almost all the officers, big businessmen, and members of the Royal family were his patients. The Vaidya Raj was thus a man of confidence of everyone in the town. And everyone used to tell his problems to the Vaidya concerning the State administration, and the Vaidya on his part tried to get them solved by using his good offices with the officers and if necessary with the ruler himself. He was respected by all.

Darbar Chandrasinh had four Ministers—one in charge of Home (Law and Order including Justice), second in charge of Finance, third in charge of Revenue, and fourth in charge of Education, Health and other miscellaneous matters. Each one was of equal status and was in independent charge of his subjects. All the four were competent and able administrators. There was therefore no question of rivalry among them so far as the powers, salaries and status were concerned. But each one wanted to show that his performance was better than the rest. They often used to tell the ruler how departments under their charge were more efficiently managed than others. The Rajah used to hear them patiently without giving out his reactions. Day after day, and month after month, each one used to speak to the Rajah, sometimes praising the ruler, sometimes deprecating his colleagues, and invariably every time boasting of his abilities.

The ruler was ultimately fed up of hearing this and once he told everyone of them that he did not like the way in which they spoke either about themselves or their brother officers. These Ministers were rather disappointed. They thought they would win the favours of the ruler, but it turned out to be otherwise. Of course, as the ruler had spoken to these Ministers individually, others did not know that the ruler had shown his displeasure to the others also. Each one thought that the Rajah was displeased with him only. But the Ministers could not afford to lose the Rajah's favour. Each one of them thought of adopting some other method to please the Rajah. The most imaginative among them was the Minister for Education. He arranged a big function to celebrate the Rajah's birthday. The Rajah was invited to distribute the prizes. A one-act play was staged by the students bringing forth the benevolent features of his good administration. Everyone including the Rajah was mightily pleased with the story of the play and the acting of young boys. But the other three Ministers were unhappy and also jealous of the praise and appreciation by the Rajah. It was however too late for them to arrange a similar function lest the Rajah might attribute such parallel function to their jealousy. But the Minister for Home (Law and Order, Justice and Prisons) did not lose heart. On the new year day it was the custom to grant pardon to some prisoners and remission to almost all. A week before the new year day, he tutored the prisoners who were being sent to work in the palace garden to request the Rajah to give Darshan to all prisoners in the jail on the new year day. The Rajah little knowing that it was prompted by the Minister in charge readily acceded to their request. On the new year day the Rajah visited the jail. He was greatly impressed by the exhibition which the jailor had put up. All articles manufactured and prepared in the jail—darees, carpets, furniture, paper work, clay models—were all beautifully prepared. One of these exhibits was a clay-statue of the Rajah himself, a beautiful smiling statue as if the Rajah himself was standing with a smile on his face. The Rajah spontaneously asked which of the prisoners had made it. The prisoners said they may be excused because this was the only one exhibit they had not prepared. They had obtained the permission of the Minister to exhibit it in the exhibition. On further query the prisoners said that they had borrowed it from the Minister. The Rajah was surprised at the excellent art of the Minister. He publicly praised him and announced a present of a gold-handled sword. This was the highest honour an officer would get in the State. Everyone congratulated the Minister for the excellent exhibition, more particularly for the Rajah's life-like statue and for the reward awarded to him. But the other three Ministers including the Minister for Education were very unhappy at his getting a reward at the hands of the Rajah. All the three met secretly and held a secret conference as to how to run down the Minister for Home. During their discussion one of them blamed the Minister for Education for starting this game. But for that the Home Minister would not have thought of holding this exhibition in the jail. Ultimately they parted without reaching any agreed conclusion. Though individually each one had come to the same conclusion—namely not to lose any opportunity to run down the other.

The race then started. Anonymous applications began to pour in into the Rajah's palace complaining against all the Ministers. The ruler was surprised to find such a large number of complaints against his Ministers. Never had he heard anybody complaining against the Ministers. How did then all of a sudden such a large number of complaints crop up? He thought to himself 'there must be something wrong somewhere. Are the Ministers really so bad and corrupt as they are painted? Or is it inter-ministerial rivalry, or what else could it be?' He gave a good deal of thought but could not make up his mind. He passed sleepless nights. During the day he was sad and sullen all the time brooding about these complaints. Had his administration gone to dogs as was stated in all the anonymous complaints?

This worry told heavily on his health, and he began to grow weaker day by day. The Vaidya was sent for. He examined the Rajah but could not diagnose any disease. The Vaidya Raj being unable to find the cause of the Rajah's illness, asked him if there was anything weighing heavily on his mind. The ruler told him all about his Ministers and the large number of anonymous complaints he received against those Ministers who otherwise were capable and good administrators. Before the Vaidya was called by the Rajah, the Ministers had also approached the Vaidya Raj to consult him and seek his advice. They had told how the Rajah treated them alike previously and how of late he had been discriminating one against the other. To one he had publicly rewarded by presenting a gold-handled sword, and the other was praised at a public function. The other two who were not praised or received any reward were looked upon by the people as Ministers who had fallen out of the Rajah's grace. The Vaidya Raj who was a shrewd statesman too, could easily understand the cause of the Rajah's illness, but he did not want to disclose that the Ministers had approached him. As if he was hearing the incidents for the first time, the Vaidya Raj told the Rajah that there was nothing wrong with his health. Sleeplessness and consequent weakness are the results of his own doing. He told him that the Rajah used to treat all his Ministers alike. Of late he had been discriminating amongst the ministers and thus each one had become jealous of the other. The anonymous complaints were engineered by the Ministers themselves.

The ruler sought Vaidya Raj's advice as to how he should deal with the ministers. 'Are they really bad Ministers? Should I dismiss some of them? he asked.

The Vaidya Raj in a sober tone replied. "No, Your Highness, that will not mend matters. On the contrary it will create greater complications. All the four Ministers are good men and are like the four ropes of a tent pulling in different directions, supporting the middle pole—which is yourself. So long as each one pulls in his own direction the middle pole will stand erect and support the tent. The moment two or three combine and pull in the same direction, the middle pole will collapse. You must, therefore, allow them to pull in their own directions and not allow two or three of them to unite against the other.

The Rajah realized the mistakes he had committed. He summoned all the four Ministers and praised them all for their good work and gave golden anklets to the other three. All the four were happy and, therefore, there was no complaint and the administration of the state went on smoothly.

## 23. UNCLE CHANGED

VASUDEV was an Office Superintendent in the Office of the Political Agent. He was obedient to his boss, industrious and also intelligent. By now he must have served about five Political Officers and everyone of them was pleased with his work. In his private life too, he was very social, sweet mannered, and soft-spoken. In the office, he was considerate and kind to his subordinates, though exacting and a hard taskmaster.

He wanted minute details of each case to be put up to him. From these details he would put the case to the Political Officer so clear and precise that, although not very familiar with Laws and customs prevailing among the different States, the British Officers were able to grasp the case quickly and decide it correctly. No wonder, Vasudeva had become a favourite of all the Political Officers under whom he had served.

Vasudeva had risen from a petty Stenographer to the post of an Office Superintendent. He had, therefore, seen life, and power did not corrupt him. Otherwise too, he was very honest and upright. But in spite of all his good qualities, he had one draw-back, and that was that he wanted himself to be recognised.

Many Rajahs, Maharajahs, Talukdars and others had to deal with the Political Agent's Office for State matters. Some had boundary disputes with neighbouring States, some had extradition cases, some came for cash grants, and some approached for enhancement of their jurisdictional powers, and so on. Vasudeva expected that these rulers, when they came to the capital, must pay him a courtesy call. If anybody failed to call on him, he took it as an offence.

The Rajahs, Maharajahs and their Dewans and accredited agents knew this quite well and therefore whenever a Ruler was to come to the capital, his accredited agent would go to Vasudeva for an appointment, which was invariably granted. These appointments kept Vasudeva quite busy at home morning and evening. Vasudeva did not mind this. On the contrary, he enjoyed Rulers visiting him one by one, a fleet of cars standing near his house. His ante-Chamber was always full of Dewans, accredited agents and other officials of the States. All this pleased him very much.

And naturally when the Dewans and the officials of a Ruler came, they would bring some presents for Vasudeva as was the custom. It must, however, be said to the credit of Vasudeva that even when there were cases of rulers which affected vitally the interests of States, he did not accept or expect costly presents or money. All that was offered to him were fruits, flowers, sometimes fresh vegetables from the Rulers' kichen-gardens and such other non-costly things. But the children of Vasudeva were very happy at receiving fresh fruits, flowers, vegetables, sugarcane, jaggery, etc., almost all very fresh from the gardens. Not a day passed when the accredited agents did not go to Vasudeva's house with such presents. Everyday between 7.30 and 10, nearly eight to ten such officers must be visiting Vasudeva's house with such presents.

But Vasudeva's family was a small one—himself, his wife and two children. How much could they consume? Vasudeva's wife gave away fruits, vegetables, sugarcane, etc., to the servants and to the neighbours and naturally they were all happy. Sometimes children took these things to their class and shared them with their school-friends.

Vasudeva was firmly saddled now and with the previous reports of his officers, the new Political Officers put blind faith in him. Vasudeva was in a position to make or mar the fortunes of Rulers. Once he had to deal with a case involving political litigation where ownership over twenty villages of a State was involved. The Ruler of the State was sure of his case. He did not believe in making "approaches". Relying on the strength and merits of his case, he decided to let the case be decided on merits, and although he visited the capital for some personal business, he failed to call on Vasudeva. Vasudeva took this as an affront. But in dealing with the case, he did not allow personal considerations to influence his judgments. Honestly he felt that the Ruler's case was not substantiated by proper evidence and because the rival Ruler was in possession of these villages for more than 50 years, he suggested to the Political Agent that status quo be maintained. The Ruler lost his case. Intrigues then started and ultimately poor Vasudeva was transferred as a Treasury Officer, a post which had nothing to do with States and rulers.

Vasudeva knew the cause of his transfer to an unimportant post. But he did not mind it. He was quite clear in his mind that he had not done anything wrong. He was also conscious that, although he felt offended at the Ruler's not calling upon him, he had not allowed his judgment to be influenced by this incident. He did not try even to plead his case before the Political Agent. After all, it was Government service and an Officer was liable to be transferred. Though Vasudeva did feel for some time that his transfer was not made in a routine manner, but was certainly because of the intrigues of the Ruler who had lost his case, he reconciled himself to his new assignment and worked as if nothing had happened.

Vasudeva's friends and admirers, among whom were Rajahs, Maharajah's Dewans and others, were really sorry for Vasudeva. They knew that Vasudeva was a straight-forward and honest man. Nobody doubted his integrity. Of course, he had one weakness, but that was comparatively a minor one. He wanted himself to be recognised. He wanted that people should come to him. At the same time, people also knew that in the particular case where he decided against the Ruler, he had honestly felt that status quo should be maintained. It may be an honest error of judgment. He did not want to harm the Ruler and take vengeance on him for not calling upon him. Thus, by and large, the people sympathised with Vasudeva.

For a week or so, the regular visitors came everyday to Vasudeva's House, but as time passed, the number began to decrease gradually and after a fortnight or so hardly any visitor was seen.

The two children, Bipin and Vimala used to receive visitors who invariably gave them some presents—fruits, flowers, vegetables, sweets etc. But when the visitors stopped bringing presents, they could not understand why they had suddenly stopped the presents.

Sri Sankaracharya

Vasudeva's house was on the main road. In those days, motor cars and scooters were rare. The distances were not much and people used to go on foot generally. The officials and other visitors were staying on the same road and had to pass by Vasudeva's house to go to the house of his successor.

Bipin and Vimala saw their father's friends passing by their house; they ran to greet them and said "Prafulla Uncle, please come in. Uncle (the children used to call Vasudeva, Uncle) has finished his Pooja. He will soon come out in the drawing room. Please come in." Prafulla replied 'Bipin, the Uncle is changed.' After some time, another friend of Vasudeva and then the third, the fourth and the fifth passed by the house, but each one of them replied, "Bipin, the Uncle is changed". The innocent children could not understand what they meant. One day they asked Vasudeva, why his friends had stopped coming, and even when they requested them to come, they said, "Uncle is changed." "Uncle, are you really changed?" asked Bipin.

Vasudeva explained to the children that he had not changed, but the visitors who were coming all these years, came with some purpose. They now think that their purpose will not be served by coming to me, but by going to another person who has come in my place. And therefore, they have changed the Uncle.

Such is the world of changing Uncles to suit one's purpose.

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